









## English Language and Literature.

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INTERMEDIATE TEXT-BOOK  
OF  
ENGLISH LITERATURE  
PART II.

BY  
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## PREFACE.

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DURING recent years painstaking research has brought to light many fresh facts connected with English Literature, and a new school of criticism has arisen, which lays stress upon the historical as well as upon the subjective standpoint. The result is that, even in a manual such as this, which has now been before the public for a considerable number of years, it has been found necessary, in bringing out a new edition, to revise the whole thoroughly and to rewrite large portions.

Throughout these alterations care has been taken to keep in view the original object of the book, namely to trace in outline the development of English Literature from the earliest times, to supply such information with regard to the lives of the chief writers as is necessary for the due appreciation of their works, to describe the more important of these works, and so far as space permitted to illustrate the works by means of extracts.

It is obvious, however, that no study of a text-book of literary history can take the place of the reading of the works themselves: a book such as this is of real value only so far as it serves as an introduction and guide to the best of our literature.

With a view to supplying further reading in the literature itself, two companion volumes to this work have been published: the *Anthology of English Verse*, by A. J. Wyatt,

M.A., and S. E. Goggin, M.A., and the *Anthology of English Prose*, by S. E. Goggin, M.A., and A. R. Weekes, M.A.; but the student, except in the case of minor writers, is advised not to content himself even with the amount of reading supplied by these two books, but to extend his first-hand acquaintance with English Literature by reading as much of the more important works as possible. The Chronological Table at the beginning will serve as a guide.

In the original form of the book the responsibility for the several parts was distributed between Mr. Wyatt and Mr. Low in the following way. Mr. Wyatt was solely responsible for the early period down to 1500 and the period 1798-1832. The years 1500-1580 were written by the late Mr. Low, and were revised and partly rewritten later by Mr. Wyatt. The years 1580-1798 stood as Mr. Low left them.

In the Third Edition the book, especially in the part ending with the year 1660, has been very freely revised. The chapters on Early English Literature have been largely rewritten in the light of recent scholarship, while the treatment of the Middle English Literature has been expanded, particularly by additions to the sections on Chaucer and Langland. Additional treatment has also been given to sixteenth century prose, a section being added on the Elizabethan novel. Restoration literature has also received greater attention, the sections on the drama particularly having been rewritten.

It is hoped that in the new form in which the book is issued, its usefulness, which has long been recognised, will be increased.

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## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

### FROM 1629 TO THE RESTORATION.

1629. Milton's *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*.  
1633. Milton's *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*  
Herbert's *The Temple*.  
Phineas Fletcher's *Purple Island*.  
Cowley's *Poetical Blossoms*.  
1634. Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*.  
Habington's *Castara*.  
Milton's *Comus*.  
1637. Jonson's *Sad Shepherd* (unfinished).  
1640. Carew's *Poems* (d. 1639).  
1641. Milton's *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline  
in England*.  
1642. Browne's *Religio Medici*.  
Denham's *Cooper's Hill*.  
Henry More's *Song of the Soul*.  
**CLOSING OF PLAY-HOUSES.**  
1644. Milton's *Areopagitica*.  
1645. Howell's *Epistolae Hoelianaæ* (1st.vol.).  
Waller's *Poems* (first published then, but written at  
various times after 1623).  
1646. Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple*, etc.  
Suckling's *Poems* (d. 1641).  
1647. Cowley's *The Mistress*.  
1648. Herrick's *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers* (written  
much earlier).

1649. **Levelace's** *Lucasta*.  
 1650 (about). **Marvell's** lyric verse.  
 1650. **Jeremy Taylor's** *Holy Living*.  
 1651. **Hobbes'** *Leviathan*.  
 1653. **Walton's** *Complete Angler*: *Lives*, 1640-78.  
 1656. **Cowley's** *Davideis* and *Pindaric Odes*.  
     Harrington's *Oceana*.  
 1658. **Browne's** *Hydriotaphia or Urn-Burial*.  
 1659. **Dryden's** *Heroic Stanzas on the Death of Cromwell*.

FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE CLOSE OF THE  
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

1660. **Pepys' Diary** begins [ends in 1669].  
 1662. **Fuller's** *Worthies of England* [Fuller d. 1661].  
 1663. **Butler's** *Hudibras* [Part ii., 1664; Part iii., 1678].  
     **Dryden's** first plays.  
 1664. **Etherege's** *Love in a Tub*.  
 1667. **Dryden's** *Essay on Dramatic Poesie*.  
     **Milton's** *Paradise Lost* [*Paradise Regained* and  
     *Samson Agonistes*, 1671].  
 1668. **Cowley's** *Essays in Prose and Verse* [Cowley d. 1667].  
     , **Aphra Behn's** *Oroonoko*.  
     , **Sedley's** *Mulberry Garden*.  
 1669. **Shadwell's** first plays.  
     **Marvell's** *Last Instructions to a Painter*.  
 1671. **Buckingham's** *Rehearsal*.  
 1672. **Wycherley's** *Love in a Wood*.  
 1674. **Clarendon** died. *History of the Grand Rebellion*,  
     published 1704-7.  
 1678. **Bunyan's** *Pilgrim's Progress* [Part ii., 1684; *Grace  
     Abounding*, 1666; *Holy War*, 1682].  
     **Cudworth's** *Intellectual System*.  
     **Walton's** *Lives* finished.

1679. Mulgrave's *Essay on Satire*.  
**Hobbes' Behemoth.**  
 Oldham's *Satires on the Jesuits*.
1680. Roscommon's *Essay on Translated Verse*.
1681. Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* [Part ii. next year].
1682. Dryden's *Medal, MacFlecknoe, Religio Laici*.  
 Southerne's *Loyal Brother*.  
 Otway's *Venice Preserved*.
- 1685-6. Last poems of Waller.
1687. Last volume of Barrow's theological works.  
 Newton's *Principia*.  
 Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther*.
1690. Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.
1692. Temple's *Essays*.
1693. Congreve's *Old Bachelor*.
1694. Wotton's *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*.
1696. Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*.
1697. Bentley's *Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris*.  
 Vanbrugh's *Relapse*  
 Evelyn's *Diary* ends [begun in 1641].
1699. Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*.  
 Farquhar's *Love and a Bottle*.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

1700. Dryden's *Fables* [and death].  
 Rowe's first play.
1702. Defoe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*.
1704. Addison's *Campaign*.  
 Swift's *Battle of the Books* and *Tale of a Tub* (probably written about 1697).
1705. John Philips' *Splendid Shilling*.

1709. Prior's *Poems*.  
Pope's *Pastorals*.  
Ambrose Philips' *Pastorals*.  
Addison and Steele's *Tatler* [*Spectator*, 1711].
1710. Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*.  
Parnell's *Hermit*.
1711. Pope's *Essay on Criticism*.
1712. Swift's *Conduct of the Allies*.  
Pope's *Rape of the Lock* [final form in 1714].
1713. Addison's *Cato*.
1714. Gay's *Shepherd's Week*.
1715. Garth's *Claremont*.  
Pope's *Homer* (finished 1725).
1719. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.
1722. Steele's *Conscious Lovers*.
1724. Swift's *Drapier's Letters*.
1725. Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*.
1726. Dyer's *Grongar Hill*.  
Thomson's *Seasons* (finished 1730).  
Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.
1728. Pope's *Dunciad* [final form, 1742].
- 1733-7. Pope's *Essays, Imitations of Horace*, etc.
1735. Somerville's *The Chase*.
1736. Butler's *Analogy*.
1737. Green's *The Spleen*.  
Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* [final form, 1742].
1738. Johnson's *London*.  
The Wesleys' *Hymns*.
1739. Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*.
1740. Richardson's first novel [*Clarissa*, 1748].
- 1742-9. Collins' *Poems*.
1742. Fielding's first novel [*Tom Jones*, 1749].  
Young's *Night Thoughts* (finished 1744).

- 1742-68. Gray's *Poems* [*Elegy*, 1751].
1743. Blair's *The Grave*.
1744. Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination* [final form, 1772].
1748. Smollett's *Roderick Random* [*Humphry Clinker*, 1771].
- Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*.
1749. Bolingbroke's *Idea of a Patriot King*.  
Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*.
1754. Hume's *History* (finished 1762).
1755. Johnson's *Dictionary*.
1756. Burke's *Vindication of Natural Society*.
1759. Adam Smith's *Moral Sentiments*.  
Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (finished 1767).
1761. Churchill's *Rosciad*.
1762. Macpherson's *Ossian*.
1763. Smart's *Song to David*.
1764. Goldsmith's *Traveller*.  
Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind*.  
Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*.
1765. Percy's *Reliques*.
1766. Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*.
1768. Chatterton's *Ella*.
1769. 'Junius' begins to write. Robertson's *Charles V.*
1770. Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*.
1773. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*.
1775. Sheridan's *The Rivals* [*School for Scandal*, '77].
1776. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* (finished '88).  
Paine's *Common Sense*.  
A. Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.
1778. Frances Burney's *Evelina*.
- 1779-81. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.
- 1779-91. Cowper's *Poems* [*The Task*, 1785].

- 1780-1819. **Crabbe's Poems** [*The Village*, 1783].
- 1783-1804. **Blake's Poems** [*Songs of Innocence*, 1787; *Experience*, 1793].
- 1786-95. **Burns' Poems**.
1787. Bentham's first writings.
1790. **Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution**.
1791. Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.
- Paine's *Rights of Man*.
1792. Rogers' *Pleasures of Memory*.
1794. **Coleridge and Southey's Fall of Robespierre**.  
Paley's *Evidences*.  
Southey's *Wat Tyler* [*Joan of Arc*, 1796].
1796. Scott's translation of Bürger's *Wild Huntsman*.
1797. The *Anti-Jacobin* started.
1798. **Wordsworth and Coleridge's Lyrical Ballads**.  
Landor's *Gebir*.  
Bloomfield's *Farmer's Boy*.
1799. Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*.
1800. Coleridge's Translation of Schiller's *Wullenstein*.  
Miss Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

1802. *Edinburgh Review* established.  
Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.
1805. Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.
1807. Crabbe's *Parish Register*.  
Moore's *Irish Melodies* (Part I.).  
**Wordsworth's Poems**.
1808. Scott's *Marmion*.
1809. *Quarterly Review* established.
1810. Scott's *Lady of the Lake*.
1811. Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (written before 1800).

1812. **Byron's Childe Harold** (Cantos I. and II.).  
Crabbe's *Tales in Verse*.  
J. and H. Smith's *Rejected Addresses*.
1813. **Hogg's Queen's Wake**.  
Southey made Laureate.
1814. **Scott's Waverley**.  
Southey's *Roderick, the last of the Goths*.  
**Wordsworth's Excursion**.
1816. **Coleridge's Christabel**.  
Leigh Hunt's *Story of Rimini*.  
Scott's *Antiquary*.  
Shelley's *Alastor*.
1817. **Coleridge's Biographia Literaria**.  
Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*.  
Moore's *Lalla Rookh*.  
Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.
1818. **Byron's Beppo**.  
Hallam's *Europe during the Middle Ages*.  
**Keats's Endymion**.  
Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*.
1819. **Byron's Don Juan** (Cantos I. and II.).  
Crabbe's *Tales of the Hall*.  
Shelley's *Cenci*.
1820. **Keats's Hyperion, Odes, Eve of St. Agnes, etc.**  
Sheridan Knowles's *Virginius*.  
Scott's *Ivanhoe*.  
Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*.
1821. **De Quincey's Confessions of an Opium-Eater**.  
Hazlitt's *Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Elizabeth*.  
Shelley's *Adonais*.
1822. **Byron's Vision of Judgment**.  
Lamb's *Essays of Elia*.  
Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianae*.

1823. Scott's *Quentin Durward*.
1824. Carlyle's *Translation of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister*.  
Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* (Vol. I.).  
Mary Mitford's *Our Village*.  
Shelley's *Posthumous Poems*.
1825. Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*.  
Macaulay's *Essay on Milton*.
1826. Disraeli's *Vivian Grey*.
1827. Hallam's *Constitutional History of England*.  
Hood's *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, etc.  
Keble's *Christian Year*.
1829. Hood's *Dream of Eugene Aram*.
1830. Cobbett's *Rural Rides*.  
Tennyson's *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*.
1831. Bulwer Lytton's *Eugene Aram*.
1832. Mrs. Jameson's *Characteristics of Shakespeare's Women*.

## CHAPTER XIX.

JOHN MILTON (1608-1674).

MILTON was born in Bread Street, Cheapside (London), at the sign of the 'Spread Eagle,' where his father carried on the business of scrivener. The poet was sent to St. Paul's School, and in due course proceeded, in his seventeenth year, to Christ's College, Cambridge, which he left in 1632. He was a most diligent student, and quitted the university deeply read in the classics, acquainted with Hebrew, and conversant with modern English, Italian, and French literature. He was, besides, skilled in music, in which he took deep delight, and had found time and inclination to lay the foundations of considerable mathematical knowledge. In spite, however, of his great attainments and his vast love of learning, he did not seek—or, at least, did not obtain—a college fellowship, which, though it might perhaps have enabled him to keep his life free from public cares, would have made it necessary for him to take holy orders. It had been, indeed, his intention at one time to enter the Church, but this he had abandoned 'on coming to some maturity of years,' and when he quitted Cambridge he returned to dwell in his father's house at Horton (in Buckinghamshire) without having fixed on a profession.

Six years (1632-8) he spent here in study, keeping ever before him the high aim of producing some great work. It was during this time of preparation that 'L'Allegro,' 'Il Penseroso,' 'Il Poesioso,' 'Comus,' 'Arcades,' and 'Lycidas' were written. Previous to this, besides some less noticeable pieces both in English and Latin, he had written in his college days the gorgeous 'Ode on the Nativity,' and the lines prefixed to the second folio edition

of Shakespeare in 1632. A sonnet, written at the time when his university days were drawing to a close, was intended to accompany a letter to a friend who had tried to persuade him to engage in some profession, instead of tarrying longer amid books and dreams. Milton admits that he is not without misgivings of his own on the wisdom of his conduct, writing :—

' That you may see that I am something suspicious of myself, and do take notice of a certain belatedness in me, I am the bolder to send you some of my nightward thoughts some little while ago, because they come in not altogether wisely, made up in a Petrarchian stanza. . . .

' How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,  
 Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year !  
 My hastening days fly on with full career ;  
 But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th  
 Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth  
 That I to manhood am arrived so near ;  
 And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
 That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.  
 Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,  
 It shall be still in strictest measure even  
 To that same lot, however mean or high,  
 Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.  
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
 As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.'

In the two companion poems, ' L'Allegro ' [The Joyous] and ' Il Penseroso ' [The Thoughtful], Milton describes life as it appears under two different aspects. ' Hence, loathed Melancholy,' cries the joyous youth,—

' But come, thou Goddess fair and free,  
 In heaven yelept Euphrosyne,  
 And by men heart-easing Mirth.

\*       \*       \*       \*

And in thy right hand lead with thee  
 The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty :  
 And if I give thee honour due,  
 Mirth, admit me of thy crew,  
 To live with her and live with thee  
 In unreproved pleasures free ;  
 To hear the lark begin his flight,  
 And, singing, startle the dull night,

From his watch-tower in the skies,  
With the dappled dawn doth rise ;  
Then to make, in spite of sorrow,  
And at my window bid good-morrow,  
Through the austeriar or the vine,  
Or the twisted aglantine.

Oft listening how the hounds and horn  
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn.  
From the side of some hoar hill,  
Through the high wood echoing shrill  
Sometimes walking, not unseen,  
By hedgerow elms on hillocks green,  
Right against the eastern gate  
Where the great sun begins his race,  
Robed in flame and amber light,  
The clouds in thousand liveries dight ;  
While the ploughman, near at hand,  
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.'

If Peperoso bids 'rain, deluding joys' begone, he will hear the nightingale, 'in her sweetest, saddest plight,' not the lark. 'Tragedy in sceptred pall' shall content him more than Hymen with the 'pomp and feast and revelry, mask and antics pageantry' dear to L'Allegro. To 'soft Lydian airs' he prefers the solemn notes of the organ;—

'But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
And love the high embowered roof,  
With antique pillars massy-proof,  
And storied windows richly dight,  
Crowning a silent religious light,  
Under whose pale beams the bairn blow,  
In the full round each below  
In shadowy high and ambient cheer,  
Amm'd with softness, through long eve  
And morn, and noon, and eve again,  
When all the world is gone, and all the eyes  
Are dimmed with sleep, and all the ears  
Are deafened with noise.'

Of every star that heaven doth shew  
And every herb that sips the dew,  
Till old experience do attain  
To something like prophetic strain.'

These two masterpieces stand in a class by themselves in our literature. There is nothing like them before Milton (though doubtless he may have been influenced somewhat by Browne's pastorals), there is nothing fit to compare with them since his day. The beauty of the matter is almost surpassed by the technical excellences of the manner. 'They satisfy the critics,' says Hallam, 'and they delight mankind'—a criticism with which everyone with a soul for poetry must agree—and he goes on to praise the judiciousness of the choice of images, the rapidity of their succession, the variety and pleasing quality of their allusions, the felicitous way in which the leading distinction of the poems is maintained, and the animation of the verse.

'Arcades' is the title of (part of) a masque written for the entertainment of the Countess of Derby (the Lady Strange to whom Spenser's 'Tears of the Muses' is dedicated). It is but short, consisting of some thirty rhymed couplets and three exquisite songs. For the stepson of the same lady, the Earl of Bridgewater, Milton produced what is not only incomparably the finest masque ever written, but also among the greatest of his own works. This is 'Comus,' which was acted at Ludlow Castle on the inauguration of the Earl as Lord President of Wales in 1634, his daughter and sons taking the chief parts in it. The Greek word *κῶμος* (Lat. *comus*) signifies 'revel.' Milton may have been struck by the name in Ben Jonson's masque 'Pleasure Resconciled to Virtue,' or in the Dutchman Van der Putten's Latin play 'Comus' (1608). Milton's treatment is wholly different, and he goes to classical sources, especially to the story of Circe in the 'Odyssey,' for his conception of the character. Accordingly he makes Comus the son of Circe by Bacchus, with all the characteristics of either parent. Milton's masque is full of allusions to classical legend and of reminiscences not only of classical poets, but of such English masters as Shake-

speare, Spenser (who, Milton confessed to Dryden,<sup>1</sup> was his master in poetry), and Fletcher. Much of the philosophy of the poem is due to Plato. Nevertheless, like all of Milton's work, great at times as his debt is to others, the treatment is wholly original; the dignity and music of the verse and the sublimity of the thought are Milton's own.

In the masque the heroine, 'The Lady,' loses her brothers in a forest<sup>1</sup> and is taken captive by the lewd god, whose arts however can avail nothing against one guarded as she is by chastity and virtue; by the help of a spirit who watches over her, her brothers find and release her, wresting the magician's poisonous draught from him and putting him and his crew to flight. We quote here some of the lines which 'The Lady' speaks on finding herself alone in the woods:—

‘A thousand fantasies  
Begin to throng into my memory,  
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,  
And airy tongues that syllable men’s names  
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.  
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound  
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended  
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.  
O welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,  
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,  
And thou, unblemished form of Chastity !  
I see ye visibly, and now believe  
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill  
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,  
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,  
To keep my life and honour unassailed.

Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night ?  
I did not err : there does a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,  
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove :  
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but  
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest  
I’ll venture . . . ’

<sup>1</sup> ‘According to a story the source of which has never been traced, the Lady Alice Egerton and her brothers had actually been benighted in Haywood Forest near Ludlow and the brothers had been separated from their sister. This story, however, seems to have come into existence little more than a hundred years ago, and it is much more likely, as Professor Masson pointed out, that such a legend grew out of *Comus* than that *Comus* grew out of the incident.’ (Geggins and Watt: Introduction to their Edition of ‘Comus.’)

Forthwith she sings this song :—

‘ Sweet echo, sweetest nymph, that liv’st unseen  
 Within thy airy shell  
 By slow Meander’s margent green,  
 And in the violet-embroidered vale  
 Where the love-lorn nightingale  
 Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well :  
 Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair  
 That likest thy Narcissus are ?  
 O, if thou have  
 Hid them in some flowery cave,  
 Tell me but where,  
 Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere !  
 So may’st thou be translated to the skies,  
 And give resounding grace to all heaven’s harmonies.’

‘L’Allegro,’ ‘Il Penseroso,’ ‘Comus,’ and ‘Lycidas’ are Milton’s contribution to Allegory. Under the two first Milton typifies the better type of Cavalier and the better type of Puritan, and shows his preference for the latter. In ‘Comus’ the poet allegorically depicts the endeavour of incontinent vice to overcome and corrupt virtue, and foretells the downfall of the sycophants and licentious writers of the licentious court of Charles I. In ‘Lycidas,’ the beautiful elegy in memory of a college friend, Edward King, drowned in the Irish Sea, the allegory is manifest. While mourning in the set form of pastoral allegory the loss of a fellow-shepherd, Milton introduces amongst his mourners St. Peter (King was intended for the Church). This incongruous Renaissance touch, the introduction of a Christian saint amid gods and goddesses of river and ocean, enables the poet to speak sternly of the corruptions of the Church, and to utter a prophecy of the destruction that shall fall upon it :—

‘ Last came, and last did go,  
 The pilot of the Galilean lake ;  
 Two massy keys he bore of metals twain  
 (The golden opea, the iron shuts amain).  
 He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake :—  
 “ How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,  
 Know of such as, for their bellies’ sake,  
 Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold !

Of other care they little reckoning make  
 Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
 And shew away the worthy bidden guest.  
 Blind mouths ! that scarce themselves know how to hold  
 A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least  
 That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs !  
 What recks it them ? What need they ? They are sped :  
 And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs  
 Grate on their scurvy pipes of wretched straw ;  
 The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,  
 But, swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw,  
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread ;  
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
 Daily devours apace, and nothing said :  
 But that two-handed engine at the door  
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.”

Such words find a fit place in the mouth of the poet who is now to bid farewell to ‘masque, and pastoral, and idyl,’ and betake himself to stern political conflict, to controversy and struggle, through which he is destined to pass before he returns again to the Muses as the poet of the great Epic and of ‘Samson Agonistes.’

‘Lycidas’ was written in 1637, towards the close of Milton’s residence at Horton. The same year his mother died, and in 1638 the poet—still educating himself, still unfixed in any profession—set out to make a tour on the continent. After travelling in Italy, where he conversed with scholars and found appreciative friends, and wrote Latin and Italian verse, he returned home, impelled to cut his journey short by the troubrous state of things in England. While abroad, he had heard of the death of his dear friend Charles Diodate in London, and wrote in memory of him the last and chief of his Latin poems, the ‘Epitaphium Damonis.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ‘The following is Hallam’s judgment on his Latin verses : “They are in themselves full of classical elegance, of thoughts natural and pleasing, of a diction culled with taste from the gardens of ancient poetry, of a versification remarkably well cadenced and grateful to the ear. There is in them, without a marked originality, which Latin verse can rarely admit but at the price of some inaccuracy or impropriety, a more individual display of the poet’s mind than we usually find.”

From Milton's return to England at the end of the summer of 1639 we may date the beginning of the second period of his activity—the period of his political work and prose writings, which extends down to the Restoration. He does not indeed appear to have intended to throw himself at once into politics, for he settled down in London as student and teacher, taking his sister's sons, Edward and John Phillips, and some other lads as pupils.

One result of this was the writing of his tractate 'Of Education,' which was published in 1644, addressed to his friend Mr. Samuel Hartlib, who shared Milton's enthusiasm for reform in education. His first prose work, however, was a treatise 'Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England' (1641), in which he first comes forward as a champion of the Puritans; it was followed by a treatise 'Of Prelatical Episcopacy,' 'Animadversions on the Remonstrants' Defence . . . against Smectymnuus,' 'Apology for Smectymnuus,' and 'The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy'; these were written 1641-2, the 'Prelatical Episcopacy' being in answer to the 'Humble Remonstrance' of Joseph Hall, Bishop of Norwich, to which five ministers had retorted under the pseudonym of Smectymnuus.<sup>1</sup>

His next set of pamphlets is connected with his unfortunate marriage, which took place in 1643, the bride being Mary Powell, the young daughter of a Cavalier Oxfordshire gentleman. Very shortly after the marriage she left her husband to visit her parents, and refused to return to him; it was then that his thoughts turned to the laws regulating the dissolution of marriage, and he published his pamphlet 'The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,' which called forth alike the condemnation not only of the Episcopalians but also of the Presbyterians, from whom Milton was now rapidly separating himself. Three other pamphlets followed on the same theme ('Judgement of Martin Bucer,' 'Colasterion,' and 'Tetrachordon');

<sup>1</sup> The word is formed from the initials of the authors' names—S. Marshall, E. Galway, T. Young, M. Newcomen, W. Spinstow.

but the deep personal interest which Milton must have had in the subject was terminated by a reconciliation which his wife effected by her complete submission and contrite repentance in 1645, at a time when (it is said) the poet was contemplating a union with another lady. It is to be added that she bore him three daughters, and seems to have lived in peace with him till her death in 1652 (she was then only six-and-twenty), and that Milton sheltered and protected her kinsfolk when they suffered in the Royalist cause.

We now have to deal with what is probably the most famous of Milton's prose writings, as it is the only one familiar to any but the student—the 'Areopagitica.' By an ordinance which came into operation in 1643, it was rendered obligatory on the author of a new publication to get the licence of the Commissioners appointed to supervise the press before such work could be issued.<sup>1</sup> Milton set the ordinance at defiance in publishing his first divorce pamphlet without licence and without printer's name, and added insult to injury by dedicating it to the Parliament. He followed this up by an open (and quite unsuccessful) attack on the censorship of the press in the tract which he entitled 'Areopagitica<sup>2</sup>: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, to the Parliament of England.' Here he denounces the restrictions on liberty of expressing opinion with the stately eloquence and passionate rhetoric of which he was a master. He strays more rarely than is usual with him in prose into labyrinthine constructions and syntactical jungles, while there is none of the rancour and scurrility which mar so much of his polemical prose. 'An intense love of liberty and truth glows through it; the majestic soul of Milton breathes such high thoughts as had not been uttered before.' It is impossible

<sup>1</sup> The regulation of the press was previous to this partly in the hands of the Star-Chamber, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London controlling the granting of licences. 'The fall of the royal authority did not mean the emancipation of the press. The Parliament had no intention of letting go the control which the monarchy had exercised; the incidence of the coercion was to be shifted upon their opponents.'—PATRICK.

<sup>2</sup> The name is taken from the Areopagitic Oration of Isocrates, a written speech like Milton's, also addressed to the national council. Areopagus ('Ares' or Mars' Hill) was the meeting-place of the Athenian Senate.

to select a passage from Milton's prose which does not give too high or too low an idea of his general style. We will, then, choose one here from the 'Areopagitica' which exhibits him at his best :—

' Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably ; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed upon Psyche as an incessant labour to cull out and sort asunder were not more intermixed. It was from out the rind of one apple tasted that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twines cleaving together, leaped forth into the world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil—that is to say, of knowing good by evil. As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continuance to forbear, without the knowledge of evil ? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather ; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue, therefore, which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure ; her whiteness is but an excremental whiteness ; which was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas, describing true temperance under the person of Guyon, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know and yet abstain.'

Milton's is not a prose that will do for everyday purposes ; it is too rarely pedestrian. When it is not soaring high aloft amid the clouds, it is only too frequently dragging flabbily and formlessly through the mire.

We must pass over very briefly the rest of Milton's <sup>The Latin</sup> prose and political work, and hasten towards Secretarieship, the crowning work of his life. About 1647 he <sup>1649.</sup> gave up teaching, his father's death having left him with a competence ; and in 1649 he accepted the post of Latin Secretary to the Council of State. The

\* *Eikonoklastes*<sup>1</sup> and the Latin treatises,<sup>2</sup> in which he loudly defended his country and poured invective on Salmasius and Morus, have not added anything to the writer's reputation.

Blindness, Unfort

1652. eyesight. At the time when he was writing the 'Defensio pro Populo,' in 1651, the sight of the left eye had entirely gone, and he tells his readers that now he must either neglect the duty of answering Salmasius, imposed on him by the Parliament, or suffer complete loss of sight. 'I could not but obey that inward monitor, I know not what, that spake to me from Heaven,' he says, and continues his work, becoming totally blind in 1652, the year of his first wife's death.

Four years later Milton married a second time; but the union, which, to judge from the sonnet to his wife's memory, was of the happiest, was severed in little over a year by her death.

This is the place perhaps for a word on the Sonnets, the *Sonnets.* only poetry he indulged himself in for the score of years following the time when the troubled state of the country called him back from Italy. We have already quoted the sonnet on his twenty-third birthday. There are others which, like this, are purely personal; as, for instance, that which is probably the sublimest of them—the one on his blindness. Some, on the other hand, are partly political, as is this, where he breathes forth his indignation on the massacre of the Vaudois in 1655:—

'Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,  
Forget not; in Thy book record their groans  
Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold

<sup>1</sup> Image-breaker. This book is an answer to the 'Eikon Basilike; or, the Portraiture of his Most Sacred Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings,' which was published shortly after the execution of Charles I., and was supposed to have been written by him. Its author was Dr. Gauden, Bishop of Worcester.

<sup>2</sup> 'Defensio pro Populo Anglicano,' 1651; 'Defensio Secunda,' 1654; 'Pro Se Defensio contra Morum,' 1655.

Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled  
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
 The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
 To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
 O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
 The triple tyrant ; that from these may grow  
 A hundredfold, who having learnt Thy way  
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe.'

In the year 1658, in which Milton lost his beloved second wife, the Protector died, and with him the hope of a continuation of the Commonwealth. Milton remained at his post as Latin Secretary (his assistant-secretary and friend, the poet Andrew Marvell, doing a large part of the work), and continued to write on behalf of the cause he loved, which was, however, now doomed. While Charles was at the gate, and all things were ripe for his return, Milton was composing treatises and pouring out advice,<sup>1</sup> until the Restoration (May 1660) forced him to look to his personal safety. He lay in hiding for a while, and was subsequently in custody for a short time; two of his books were burnt by the common hangman, but no punishment was inflicted on him. And now, fortunately, his part in political strife was over, and he was free to devote himself entirely to far greater work.

As far back as 1641, at least seventeen years before he actually began to write his great Epic, Milton had in his 'Reason of Church Government' declared his intention of devoting himself to

<sup>1660-1674.</sup>  
 'Paradise  
 Lost,' 1674.

'Paradise  
 Regained,'  
 1671.  
 'Samson  
 Agonistes,'  
 1671.  
 out His Seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases.'

What the exact nature of that work was to be he had evidently not quite determined, though the subject which

<sup>1</sup> 'A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes,' 'Considerations towards the Likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church,' 'Ready and Easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth,' etc. (1659-60).

he ultimately selected appears at the head of several score others in a list made out in 1640. Previous to that, he seems to have almost definitely made choice of 'Arthur' as the hero of the great work he intended to write; and, indeed, the lines which occur in the Latin poem, written at Naples (1638-9) to his host Manso, show that his thoughts had early turned that way.<sup>1</sup>

However, he does not appear to have commenced any poem on this subject, but between the years 1639-42 he made no less than four schemes, or 'drafts,' for a work which was to be called 'Paradise Lost,' or 'Adam Unparadized.' Of these, two are mere lists of 'the Persons,' whilst the other two are short abstracts, or 'plots,' of a drama, which was evidently the form the poet originally intended to give to his work. During the storms of the Civil Wars, however, the cares and troubles of public employment and controversy left him little leisure for a task for which, as he said, 'industriously selected reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs,' were in the highest degree needful; and it was not till the year of Cromwell's death that Milton actually began to carry out his project. After the Restoration, though 'fallen on evil days . . .

And evil tongues,  
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round  
And solitude,'  
;

he was left to finish his life in peaceful neglect and diligent obscurity.

'Paradise Lost' was finished either in 1663 (when Milton married for the third time) or in one of the two years following, and Milton took the MS. with him to the cottage at Chalfont St. Giles (Buckinghamshire) to which

<sup>1</sup> They are thus translated by Cowper:—

‘Should I recall hereafter into rhyme  
The kings and heroes of my native clime?  
Arthur, the chief, who, even now, prepares  
In subterraneous being, future wars,  
With all his martial knights, to be restored  
Each to his seat around the federal board!  
And oh! if spirit fail me not, disperse  
Our Saxon plundersers in triumphant verse.’

he had retreated to avoid the Plague, which was raging in London in 1665. It was not published till 1667—the delay was probably due to the Fire and the interruption of all business consequent thereon—when it appeared under the title of ‘Paradise Lost: a Poem written in Ten Books.’ In the second edition, however (1674), it was divided into twelve books (by splitting Books vii. and x.), in which form it has remained. ‘Paradise Regained’ and ‘Samson Agonistes’ were published together in 1671, three years before Milton’s death. According to an anecdote of Milton’s friend, the Quaker Ellwood, the former of the two was written in part, at any rate, at Chalfont, and perhaps was finished there.

‘The first thing to be considered in an epic poem is the fable,’ says Addison; and in doing this we can scarcely avoid taking ‘Paradise Lost’ and ‘Paradise Regained’ together. The former poem deals with the rebellion of the angels, the creation, the temptation of man, and the fall; the second with the temptation of the Son of God, and His victory. The subject-matter is, of course, taken from the Scriptures, but inasmuch as many other writers have dealt with the same or similar themes, there has been much ingenuity spent on trying to find sources from which Milton may have derived some part of his poems. This is not a matter of much, if of any, importance, seeing that the two poems as we have them bear on every portion of them the stamp of Milton’s own peculiar genius, and are in every way his own. It would be strange indeed if in the course of his vast reading the thoughts or expressions of other writers had not here and there suggested to him ideas which are reflected in his works; but there does not seem any reason to think that he in any way ‘borrowed’ the ideas or ‘copied’ the writings of others.<sup>1</sup>

The ‘fable’ of ‘Paradise Lost,’ as Milton tells it, may be roughly divided into three parts: (a) the rebellion of the

<sup>1</sup> Some of the chief sources from which it has been stated Milton may have derived hints are: Andreini’s ‘Adamo’ (which Voltaire thinks he might have seen acted in Italy), Alfani, Serano, Tasso, Marin; Grotius’ ‘Adamus Exal,’ Taubmann’s ‘Bellum Angelicum’; Jacob Cats, Van Vondel; Cedmon, Sylvester’s translation of ‘Du Bartas,’ Phineas Fletcher, Andrew Ramsay, and a score of others.

angels and their material strife with God (Books i., ii., iii., and the greater part of v., vi.); ( $\beta$ ) the creation of mankind, the intercession of the Messiah, and the conditions of man's existence (touched on in Books i., iv., and part of v., vii., viii.); and ( $\gamma$ ) the wiles of Satan against man, the transgression of Eve and Adam, and their expulsion (Books ix.-xii.).

'Paradise Regained' differs from its predecessor in being rather dialogue in epic form than an epic; it is a poem in four books dealing with one episode—the Temptation in the Wilderness—in the life of Christ. It lacks that 'interest of the story' which 'Paradise Lost' has in the highest degree, notwithstanding the fact that in the greater work the conclusion is fully anticipated by the reader, and the number of human characters is limited to two, who are not introduced till the fourth book, and have no part in Books vi. and vii., and very little in viii. In 'Paradise Regained' the chief interlocutors are naturally Christ and Satan, but in the introductory scenes are also introduced the Almighty Father, Mary, and in the world of fallen angels Belial.

One supposed defect in the story of 'Paradise Lost'  
*Is Satan  
the hero  
of the epic?*
 has been frequently dwelt on, and that is that Satan, and not Adam, is the hero of the epic.  
 We think that only those whose reading of Milton has been confined to the first two books can be misled by this nonsensical paradox. In the first two books Satan is naturally made an heroic figure; he is still an Archangel though fallen, one of the chief Archangels, and king over his fellows. His character, his power, his capacity for evil must be exalted in order to show the epic greatness of the coming conflict, in order to rouse the reader's fears for himself, human sympathy with his first parents and gratitude for his redemption. But we have not to wait for 'Paradise Regained' to see the steady deterioration in Satan's character. Surely, to take one instance alone, there is little of the heroic in Satan when he takes the form of a toad to whisper in Eve's ear and is stirred up by the spear of Ithuriel. At the close of the poem Satan's degradation is complete.

It is clear then that Man is really the heroic figure of the poem; and this is all the truer if we consider together 'Paradise Lost' (where Man though conquered wins our sympathies and the coming of the Greater Man is foretold) and 'Paradise Regained' (where the Divine Man triumphs). In the latter poem Satan is not only vanquished ignominiously, but appears before us a mean, shifty, paltry creature, as contrasted with the haughty, desperate impersonation of evil of the earlier work.

The chief characteristics of Milton's epic may be summed up in the word 'sublimity.' His imagination is lofty and grand, his style majestic and sonorous. Magnificent imagery with him seems to be merely the fit and natural accompaniment and expression of magnificent ideas. It is in his sublimest conceptions that his language most aptly fits his thought. When he deals with commonplace matters (which is, seldom enough), the effect is that of second-rate musical compositions played by a great artist on a splendid instrument. 'A feeling of spaciousness such as no other poet gives' is the description given by Lowell of the effect produced by the 'vistas and avenues' of Milton's verse. It would be idle to quote long passages to justify this statement. No one who reads 'Paradise Lost' can fail to be struck at once with this peculiar power of Milton. He can exercise it in half a dozen lines :—

‘Here let those  
Who boast in mortal things, and wondering tell  
Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,  
Learn how their greatest monuments of fame  
And strength and art are easily outdone  
By spirits reprobate, and in an hour,  
What in an age they, with incessant toil  
And hands innumerable, scarce perform.’

*P. L., i. 692-699.*

He can make us feel it in a few syllables :—

‘Who would lose,  
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,  
*These thoughts that wander through eternity?*’—*ii. 146.*

Or he can sustain the spell through scores and scores of lines, as in Book xi. and elsewhere."

The prime defects that are to be noted in 'Paradise Lost' are due to that utter lack of humour in Milton which prevented his using the file more freely. Thus in Book vi. the employment by Satan and his forces of 'devilish engines' (*i.e.* cannon) strikes one as being ludicrous rather than terrible. The epic battle resembles a contemporary fight between Cavaliers and Roundheads. In Book ii. the description of Death and his mother Sin and 'the yelling monsters—hourly conceived and hourly born' disgusts rather than awes. He makes the Almighty argue like 'a school divine,' with the attendant danger of possibly fallacious arguments. Adam at times does not fascinate us or win our sympathies: he is a good Puritan householder of Milton's period with a taste for theology haranguing a somewhat bored wife. In Book v. we have the grotesque incident of Eve being graciously allowed to 'crown the flowing cups' for Adam and Raphael, while 'down they sat and to their viands fell.' His use of certain words now and then which raise a comical and commonplace image in our mind, and thus mar the whole of a beautiful passage, is fortunately not frequent. Perhaps the lines 391-396 in Book v. will exemplify this blemish:—

‘ Raised of grassy turf  
Their table was, and mossy seats had round,  
And on her ample square, from side to side,  
All Autumn piled, though Spring and Autumn here  
Danced hand-in-hand. A while discourse they hold—  
No fear lest dinner cool.’

A French critic sees these blemishes more easily than one of Milton's nationality and temper. And Taine asks fairly enough: 'Was it worth while leaving earth to find in heaven carriage-works, buildings, artillery, a manual of tactics, the art of salutations and the Almanach de Gotha? Are these the things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart to conceive"? What a gap between this monarchical frippery and the visions of Dante, the souls floating like stars amid the harmonies,' and so on!

Of the metre Milton uses he himself says:—

'The measure is English heroic verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek and of Virgil in Latin—rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, of the in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced, indeed, since by the use of some modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse, than else they would have expressed them. Not without cause, therefore, some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rime both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of itself to all judicious ears trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings—a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect, then, of rime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming.'

It will be seen from the above that Milton rejoiced in the 'overflow' from line to line. By its use he is able to introduce a great amount of variety into his versification, inasmuch as, the pause in the line shifting wherever sense and harmony require, his verse never becomes monotonous and stiff. The normal decasyllabic heroic line, whether in blank verse or rhyme, consists of five iambs following one after another, as in this line (Pope's 'Essay on Man') :—

One truth | is clear | whatev- | er is | is right,

and in this actual form Pope sometimes, Dryden less frequently, uses it. This is the line of five stresses, and Milton sparingly employs it in this precise form, which even the 'correctest' poets vary by using a trochee (accented followed by unaccented) after a pause (especially at the *beginning* of each line) and elsewhere. But a large number of Milton's lines contain no more than four full stresses, and some have only three, and by combining these, shifting the position of the pause in the line, and

employing every variety of cadence he has produced an epic metre surpassed perhaps by none.

Take for a very brief example of his art such lines as these :—

'Would thou hadst hearkened to my views, and stayed	4
With me, as I besought thee, when that strange	3
Desire of wandering, this unhappy morn,	4
I know not whence, possessed thee ! We had then	3
Remained still happy—not, as now, despoiled	5
Of all our good, shamed, naked, miserable !	5
Let none henceforth seek needless cause to approve	5
The faith they owe ; when earnestly they seek	4
Such proof, conclude they soon begin to fail.	5

P. L., ix. 1134-1143.

In the above nine lines the reader will observe that there are two with three full stresses (in line 4, however, possibly the word *know* may have a full stress), three with four stresses, and four with five. Every line, it will be noted, 'overflows' except line 6. This line, it will be observed, has five accented syllables, three of which come together. Words like 'to approve' in line 7 and 'miserable' in line 6 are sometimes written for metrical purposes 't' approve,' 'mis'rable'; but it is quite possible to preserve the rhythm of the lines without eliding the vowels. Note, again, the elasticity in Milton's verse of the caesural pause, which, in our remarks upon Blank Verse in the hands of Shakespeare, we marked as being one of the great improvements introduced by the last-named poet. Milton allows himself entire freedom in placing his pause, and in his verse it is to be found after any syllable in the line. Thus in our reading of the above lines we (though other readers may occasionally differ) think that the natural caesura falls 1; 7; 5; 7; 5; 4; 4; 4; 2 respectively—the numbers representing the syllable before the pause in each line. By the happy use of this device all the

monotony which bad blank verse possesses is entirely charmed away. It is, however, to be remarked that Milton, unlike Shakespeare, scarcely ever makes use of an extra syllable at the end of a line in 'Paradise Lost'; this liberty, which is frequently indulged in by the dramatists, and by Milton in his earlier poems, is used to a limited extent in 'Paradise Regained,' e.g.—

As thou to thy reproach may'st well remem- | ber.—*P. R.*, iii. 66.

We come now to his last poem, the death of the blind 'Samson' champion in slavery. Milton's preface to 'Agonistes.' 'Samson Agonistes' justifies his composing 'that sort of dramatic poem called tragedy,' 'the gravest, most moral, and most profitable of all other poems; therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, *by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such-like passions*'<sup>1</sup>; that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated.'

That Milton had no feeling against stage-plays, as such, is evident from his praise of 'the well-trod stage' ('L'Allegro'), his noble verses on Shakespeare, and his early masques, 'Arcades' and 'Comus.' As we have seen, he had even planned a drama on the subject of 'Paradise Lost' before he gave it its epic form; and it is highly probable that he would have written more frequently in the 'dramatic form' but for the fact that Puritan public opinion was altogether opposed to the stage, so that theatres were shut by order of Parliament (from 1642-60).

Milton, in the preface to his 'Samson,' finds it necessary to quote the authority of St. Paul and of Gregory Nazianzen 'to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day, with other common interludes; happening through the poet's error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity, or introducing trivial and

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<sup>1</sup> A translation of Aristotle's definition of 'Tragedy,' which begins, '*An imitation of a serious and perfect action of great importance by actors and not by narrators which manages,*' and ends as in the text. The reader should notice this, and Milton's explanation of—a much disputed point—what Aristotle's *καθάρισμα* or 'purging' means.

vulgar persons ; which by all judicious hath been counted absurd, and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people.'<sup>1</sup> Milton has no intention corruptly to gratify the people by the production of an entertaining sensational play ; he has sought to 'justify the ways of God to man,' he says in 'Paradise Lost,' and he seeks to perform the same task in his dramatic poem.

It is scarcely necessary to point out how in many ways he has identified himself with Samson Agonistes (the Struggler) ; the strong personal feelings which constantly break forth in his epics pervade the whole of his drama. Like Samson he has suffered from the falseness of woman and is now blind and helpless among the Philistines. Looking back in his forsaken old age on his chaste, pious youth, and the stormy contests amid which his manhood had been passed, he might well say, like Samson,

'I was his nursling once, and choice delight,  
 His destined from the womb,  
 Promised by heavenly message twice descending.  
 Under his special eye  
 Abstemious I grew up and thrived a main ;  
 He led me on to mightiest deeds,  
 Above the nerve of mortal arm,  
 Against the uncircumcised, our enemies,  
 But now hath cast me off as never known,  
 And to those cruel enemies,  
 Whom I by his appointment had provoked,  
 Left me all helpless, with the irreparable loss  
 Of sight—reserved alive to be repeated  
 The subject of their cruelty or scorn.  
 Nor am I in the list of them that hope ;  
 Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless ;  
 This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,  
 No long petition—speedy death,  
 The close of all my miseries and the balm.'

The despairing mood is, however, not the prevalent one, for the poem is the glorification of the Almighty, who, after duly punishing His disobedient creature, makes him the instrument of the downfall of the foes of Samson's race, and the means of its deliverance.

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<sup>1</sup> The date of his writing thus is 1668, or one of the two years following.

'The circumscription of time, wherein the whole drama begins and ends, is, according to ancient rule and best example, within the space of twenty-four hours,'<sup>1</sup> and the action passes rapidly before our eyes. We see Samson first led out to rest awhile during the festivity of the Philistines in honour of Dagon: his countrymen (the Chorus) come to visit him and endeavour to console him; Manoah, too, his father, is there seeking to ransom him; there are two episodes, viz. the dialogue between Samson and his false wife Dalila, and that between him and the giant Harapha; then, when 'his giantship is gone, somewhat crestfallen,' an officer of the Philistines comes to bid him make sport in the temple. Samson at first refuses to go, but presently, feeling the inspiration of God within him, complies. The catastrophe is told to the Chorus and Manoah, who hear the crash of the falling temple, by an Israelite who witnessed it. 'Samson hath quit himself,' Manoah bursts forth exultantly,

'Like Samson, and heroically hath finished  
A life heroic—on his enemies  
Fully revenged. . . .  
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail  
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,  
Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair,  
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.'

In the work of no poet, not even Shakespeare excepted, is there a line of division so clearly marked as we find it in the work of Milton. His Early Poems are full of a sober joy, of expectation, of confidence; then we have the anger and querulousness of his polemical prose tracts. There comes upon him the appalling scourge of blindness and Milton regains his sight: he regains that calmness, dignity, and patience which mark alike his noblest prose, his Sonnets, and the poems of his younger manhood. The great poems of his old age and ripeness, when the evil cause, the cause of Comus, had conquered and Milton, like his blind Samson, was helpless in the power of his enemies, are even fuller of the spirit of patience, of trust in the

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to 'Samson Agonistes,' where Milton makes it plain that he has modelled his poem by the examples of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

future, of dignified hope. Milton has allowed us to catch glimpses of his soul, to form some mental conception of his vast powers in all his works ; into his poems written at the close of his life he seems literally to have projected *himself*. Here are the last strains of his noble music, in which is summed up the Miltonic belief ; it is put into the mouth of Samson's faithful friends :—

‘ All is best, though we oft doubt  
     What the unsearchable dispose  
     Of Highest Wisdom brings about,  
         And ever best found in the close.  
     Oft He seems to hide His face,  
         But unexpectedly returns,  
     And to His faithful champion hath in place  
         Bore witness gloriously ; whence Gaza mourns,  
     And all that band them to resist  
         His uncontrollable intent ;  
     His servants He with new acquist  
         Of true experience, from this great event,  
     With peace and consolation hath dismissed,  
         And calm of mind—all passion spent.’

With all this clear-cut division in his work, yet even in his earliest poems we can trace the great hand of Milton. There is a steady line of progression. Many lines in the ‘Ode on the Nativity’ can be set beside the greatest lines in ‘Paradise Lost’ : the music of his epic is already to be found, although more floating and less sustained, in the ‘Lycidas’ and ‘Comus.’ Milton’s poems are so instinct with the spirit of the time of life at which he wrote them that young readers cannot enjoy his later and greater work, while older readers must make themselves young again to feel to the full the magic of ‘L’Allegro’ and of Milton’s earlier work generally. So uniformly great is Milton that we can say of him, what we could not with truth say even of Shakespeare, that no line of his verse is unworthy of the writer, there is no line that we could wish away.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE PROSE (1580-1625) : HOOKE, BACON, RALEIGH, AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES.

WE have already (see p. 226) spoken of the merits of the prose of Shakespeare: we now come to consider those of his contemporaries who wrote a great prose style for purposes other than dramatic. The three greatest names of Shakespeare's age in the history of the development of English prose are undoubtedly Hooker, Bacon, and Raleigh, that is if we leave out of our reckoning Shakespeare himself and his great brother dramatists and also the translators of the Authorised Version of the Bible. We will speak about the former at the beginning of the next chapter, of the translators at the end of this.

Hooker was born at Heavitree, in Devonshire, and received his early education at the Exeter Grammar School. His parents were in poor circumstances; but the help of a more prosperous relative, and the friendship of Bishop Jewel, enabled the young Hooker to go to Corpus Christi College, Oxford. A diligent student at the University, he was rewarded by a fellowship in 1577, and took holy orders four years later. After holding a living in Buckinghamshire for a short time, he was appointed to the Mastership of the Temple, obtaining this preferment through the good offices of Archbishop Sandys and Bishop Whitgift.

His fellow-competitor for the mastership, Travers, was an ardent Puritan, while Hooker was a staunch supporter of the Church of England as by law established. Travers, though unsuccessful in his effort, remained in his post as afternoon-lecturer at the Temple, and preached Calvinistic doctrines: Hooker, in his discourses, combated these views.

'The pulpit,' wrote Fuller, 'spake pure Canterbury in the morning, and Geneva in the afternoon.' As one consequence of these differences of views, Hooker was charged by Travers with heresy, a charge to which Hooker replied. Moreover, he determined to undertake a general investigation and a systematic exposition of the fundamental principles on which the constitution of the Church is based. To obtain proper leisure for his studies, he sought a quiet country rectory in place of his disputatious London ~~post~~. The living of Boscombe, in Wiltshire, was bestowed on him; and there he wrote the first four books of his great work, 'The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.' He was subsequently transferred to the wealthier parish of Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, where he died in 1600. From his 'Life,' as written by Walton, it seems that he was much 'henpecked' by the shrewish and uninteresting wife whom he married soon after taking orders.

'The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity' was planned to consist of eight books. The first four books were published about 1593, and the fifth appeared in 1597. The remaining three were not issued in their author's lifetime, and doubts exist as to their genuineness: it is thought that Books VII. and VIII. were manufactured or pieced together from notes made by Hooker for the great work, in which Book VI. (as we have it) appears to be entirely out of place. In the first book Hooker thus sets forth the motives that urge him to his task:—

'The Laws of the Church, whereby for so many ages together we have been guided in the exercise of Christian religion and the service of the true God, our rites, customs, and orders of ecclesiastical government, are called in question: we are accused as men that will not have Christ Jesus to rule over them, but have wilfully cast his statutes behind their backs, hating to be reformed and made subject unto the sceptre of his discipline. Behold, therefore, we offer the laws whereby we live unto the general trial and judgment of the whole world; heartily beseeching Almighty God, whom we desire to serve according to his own will, that both we and others (all kind of partial affection being clean laid aside) may have eyes to see and hearts to embrace the things that in his sight are most acceptable.'

And because the point about which we strive is the quality of our laws, our first entrance hereinto cannot better be made, than

with eonsideration of the nature of law in general, and of that law which giveth life unto all the rest, which are commendable, just and good ; namely, the law whereby the Eternal himself doth work. Proceeding from hence to the law, first of Nature, then of Scripture, we shall have the easier access unto those things which come after to be debated, concerning the particular cause and question which we have in hand.'

Hooker is a gentle controversialist in an ungentle age, and his great book partakes of his own nature. It is an attempt, like Newman's later, to prove Anglicanism the *Via Media* between Puritanism and Catholicism. Its central thought is 'the unity and all-embracing character of law as the manifestation of the divine order of the universe.'

Hooker's place as a stylist is generally regarded as a very exalted one. 'The great treatise,' it has been well said, 'first proved the capacity of English prose for treating severe topics with a force and beauty which the great classical models rarely excelled. Hooker's style is based on Latin models, and is often cumbrous and stiff ; but it never lacks solidity or dignity. He was a thorough logician in the arrangement of his sentences, always giving the emphatic word the emphatic place, even at the cost of intricacies of construction ; and was keenly sensitive to the harmonious sequence of words.'

"His style," says Fuller, "was long and pithy, driving on a whole flock of clauses before he comes to the close of a sentence" ; but, although he demands his reader's full attention, he is not unduly prolix, and extorts, by his own intellectual cogency, his reader's acquiescence in his conclusions. In his own day the grandeur of his literary style excited the sneers of his enemies, who charged him with sacrificing religious fervour to culture and philosophy. Swift asserts that Hooker . . . had written so naturally that his English had survived all changes of fashion. In Hallam's phrase, "Hooker not only opened the mine, but explored the depths, of our native eloquence." From a literary point of view, Hooker must be ranked with Bacon.'

Francis Bacon was the son of Sir Nicholas, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. After his education at Cambridge, and a sojourn on the Continent, he turned to the law, and was called to the Bar in 1582. Two years later he entered Parliament, and began at once to play a prominent part in affairs. At Elizabeth's court he had powerful enemies, as well as some friends; and he received no office from the Queen, save the reversion of a post which did not fall vacant for many years. He was, however, one of the counsel chosen to conduct the impeachment of Essex, and has been much blamed for the warmth with which he attacked his benefactor. After the accession of James I. he became in turn Solicitor-General, Attorney-General, and Lord Chancellor, being dismissed from the last dignity, in 1621, on the ground of corruption.<sup>1</sup> His own comment upon the verdict was: 'I was the justest judge that was in England these fifty years, but it was the justest censure in Parliament that was these two hundred years.'

Of Bacon's works, the larger (but perhaps not the more important) part is written in Latin; for he was firmly impregnated with the belief of the more enduring value of the classical tongues, as compared with modern idioms. 'These modern languages will at one time or another play the bank-rowte with books; and since I have lost much time with this age, I would be glad if God would give me leave to recover it with posterity.' He had even his 'Essays' turned into Latin. His first published work, however, was an English 'Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England.' In English, too, are written the famous 'Essays,' of which the first ten were published in 1597, being followed by some thirty more in 1612, and completed (the whole number being now fifty-eight) in the year before his death. It is to these Essays that he owes his commanding position in our literature—a position, however, which would have been high had it been due only to his other works in English,

<sup>1</sup> It may be well to point out that, though he is generally known as 'Lord Bacon,' that designation is incorrect. He was Sir Francis Bacon, then Baron Verulam, and finally Viscount St. Albans.

the chief of which are: the 'Advancement of Learning' (1605), the 'History of the Reign of Henry VII.' (1622), 'Sylva Sylvarum' (published posthumously), and a fragmentary 'New Atlantis.'

His chief Latin work—and that on which his fame as a philosopher mainly rests—is the 'Novum Organum.' This and the 'Advancement of Learning' (translated into Latin by its author, and much enlarged as 'De Augmentis Scientiarum') were to form parts of the 'Instauratio Magna,' a great project never completed. 'De Augmentis,' with its survey of the state of learning, was to be the first section. Next should follow the 'Novum Organum,' showing the way in which new truths could be discovered, the mode advocated being what is now known as the inductive method<sup>1</sup>—urging the necessity of going 'from particular things to those which are but one step more general, from those to others of still greater extent, and so on to such as are universal.' The primary object of man is to acquire knowledge, but in the pursuit of knowledge he has to fight against four main predispositions of the human mind to error. These Bacon, after Plato's 'Republic,' calls 'idols of the mind.' He divides them into 'idols of the tribe,' or errors due to our common human nature; 'idols of the cave,' or errors due to our own individuality; 'idols of the market-place,' or errors due to the fallacies inherent in language; 'idols of the theatre,' or errors due to the current philosophies of the day. The object, then, of Bacon's research is to investigate the Scientific Method of destroying these idols. We are not here concerned with Bacon's philosophy, but as these 'idols' have become part of our literature we could not pass them by.

The following extract from the Essays ('Of Expense') is an illustration of the close-packed, clear, half-epigrammatic style in which Bacon clothes his acute worldly wisdom :—

'Riches are for spending, and spending for honour and good actions, therefore extraordinary expense must be limited by the worth of the

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<sup>1</sup> The unwary reader should note that Bacon did not discover this method, which is as old as philosophy itself.

occasion ; for voluntary undoing may be as well for a man's country as for the kingdom of heaven. But ordinary expense ought to be limited by a man's estate, and governed with such regard as it be within his compass, and not subject to deceit and abuse of servants, and ordered to the best show, that the bills may be less than the estimation abroad. Certainly if a man will keep but of even hand, his ordinary expenses ought to be but to the half of his receipts ; and if he think to wax rich, but to the third part. It is no baseness for the greatest to descend and look into their own estate. Some forbear it, not upon negligence alone, but doubting to bring themselves into melanoholy, in respect they shall find it broken. But wounds cannot be cured without searching. He that cannot look into his own estate at all had need both choose well them whom he employeth, and change them often, for new are more timorous and less subtle. He that can look into his estate but seldom, it behoveth him to turn all to certainties. A man had need, if he be plentiful in some kind of expense, to be as saving again in some other : as, if he be plentiful in diet, to be saving in apparel ; if he be plentiful in the hall, to be saving in the stable, and the like. For he that is plentiful in expenses of all kinds will hardly be preserved from decay. . . .'

To Bacon has been given the credit of introducing the 'Essay' into English literature : it would be truer to say he introduced the word in its literary sense into our language, for, as the reader can see, the Baconian Essay has very little resemblance to the modern literary product which Addison and Steele were to popularise. Bacon derived the word from Montaigne and meant by it, as he says, 'certain brief notes set down rather significantly than curiously' (*i.e.* without literary care). His Essays have thus no artistic form, being without beginning or ending, and consist in the main of oracular utterances interspersed with illustrative quotations strung together on a more or less tenuous thread of unity provided by the title. Many of his wise and weighty sentences would in themselves provide material for an essay and have added to our proverbial literature : *e.g.* 'Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark'; 'He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune'; 'A single life doth well with Churchmen, for charity will hardly water the ground, where it must first fill a pool'; and so on.

'It is characteristic of Bacon's philosophical writings,' says Hallam, 'that they have in them a spirit of movement, a perpetual reference to what man is to do in order to an

end, rather than to his mere speculation upon what is. In his Essays this is naturally still more prominent. They are, as quaintly described in the title-page of the first edition, "places (*loci*) of persuasion and dissuasion"; counsels for those who would be great as well as wise. They are such as sprang from a mind ardent in two kinds of ambition, and hesitating whether to found a new philosophy, or to direct the vessel of the state. We perceive, however, that the immediate reward attending greatness, as is almost always the case, gave it a preponderance in his mind; and, hence, his Essays are more often political than moral: they deal with mankind, not in their general faculties or habits, but in their mutual strife, their endeavours to rule others or to avoid their rule. . . .

'The transcendent strength of his mind is visible in the whole tenor of these Essays, unequal as they must be from the very nature of such compositions. They are deeper and more discriminating than any earlier, or almost any later, work in the English language, full of recondite observation, long matured and carefully sifted. It is true that we might wish for more vivacity and ease. Bacon, who had much wit, had little gaiety; his Essays are consequently stiff and grave, where the subject might have been touched with a lively hand. . . . The sentences have sometimes too apophthegmatic a form, and want coherence; the historical instances, though far less frequent than with Montaigne, have a little the look of pedantry to our eyes. But it is from this condensation, from this gravity, that the work derives its peculiar impressiveness. Few books . . . are more generally read: . . . few in our language so well repay the pains, or afford more nourishment to the thoughts.'

Bacon wrote masques, none of which has come down to us, and a metrical translation of some psalms which has, as well as the graceful translation of a Greek epigram. None of his writings attests his possession of the high poetic imagination; and it was left to our own paradox-loving age, the age of spiritualists and table-turning, to attempt to father upon Bacon not only all the plays of Shakespeare, but those of

The Bacon-Shakespeare Bubble.

Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' and a few other unconsidered trifles, such as, of all things, Pope's translation of the Iliad ! This original theory of the Baconian authorship of the plays, made in America (1857) by a not too wise lady of Bacon's own name, has, it is needless to say, no support from any scholar with extended first-hand knowledge of our Elizabethan literature. The base of the paradox was the theory that poor Shakespeare was not well enough educated to write the plays. As if anybody was, as if you can educate Shakespeares, as if his plays did not teem with instances of a want of scholarship impossible to the learned Bacon !

There is undoubtedly no Elizabethan writer but Shakespeare who can claim to stand beside Bacon and Hooker as their peer in prose ; yet there is one at least who, when at his best, is as fine a writer as either of them. This is Raleigh, whose writings are extremely unequal, being on the whole rather dull and flat, but lit up, ever and anon, by glowing bursts of eloquence. There are verses extant of his which entitle him to mention among the poets, especially if we rightly ascribe to him 'The Lie,' in which the soul is bidden to go 'upon a thankless errand,' and

‘ Say to the Court, it glows  
And shines like rotten wood ;  
Say to the Church, it shows  
What's good and doth no good :  
If Court and Church reply,  
Then give them both the lie.’

Tell men of high condition  
That manage the Estate,  
Their purpose is ambition,  
Their practice only hate :  
And if they once reply,  
Then give them all the lie.’

In other verse—e.g. the dainty mocking reply to Marlowe's 'Passionate Shepherd,' the 'Fairy Queen' Sonnet, etc.—he shows high gifts, and he has his niche in literary history as Spenser's 'Shepherd of the Ocean.'

In his unfinished 'History of the World,' a work planned on too large a scale for any one man to execute, there are

specimens (especially in the preface and towards the end) of singular eloquence, such as the following :—

'If we seek a reason of the succession and continuance of this boundless ambition in mortal men, we may add to that which hath already been said, that the Kings and Princes of the world have always laid before them the actions, but not the ends, of those great ones which preceded them. They are always transported with the glory of the one, but they never mind the glory of the other, till they find the experience in themselves. They neglect the advice of God, while they enjoy life, or hope it ; but they follow the counsel of Death upon his first approach. It is he that puts into man all the wisdom of the world, without speaking a word ; which God with all the words of his Law, promises, or threats, doth infuse.—Death, which hateth and destroyeth man, is believed ; God, which hath made him, and loves him, is always deferred. "I have considered," saith Solomon, "all the works that are under the Sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit" : but who believes it, till Death tells it us ? It was Death which, opening the conscience of Charles V., made him enjoin his son Philip to restore Navarre ; and King Francis the First of France command that justice should be done upon the murderers of the Protestants in Merindol and Cabrieres, which till then he neglected. It is, therefore, Death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself. He tells the proud and insolent that they are but abjects, and humbles them at the instant ; makes them cry, complain, and repent, yea, even to hate their forepassed happiness. He takes the account of the rich, and proves him a beggar ; a naked beggar, which hath interest in nothing, but in the gravel that fills his mouth. He holds a glass before the eyes of the most beautiful, and makes them see herein, their deformity and rottenness ; and they acknowledge it.

O eloquent, just and mighty Death ! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded ; what none hath dared, thou hast done ; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised : thou hast drawn together all the far-fetched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words,—*Hic jacet.*'

When Raleigh wrote this he was in prison, into which he had been cast soon after the accession of James I., on the charge of complicity in Lord Cobham's plot. His adventurous life terminated on the scaffold in 1618, on his return from an unsuccessful search for a gold mine. More than twenty years before, he had ascertained, he thought, where El Dorado lay, when he first found 'the Large, Beautiful, and Rich Empire of Guiana,' as he called it in the account he wrote of his 'Discovery.'

**Other Elizabethan sailors wrote accounts of their voyages,**  
**Voyages:** for there was much interest in description of  
**Hakluyt.** strange lands and new routes in these days.  
**Purchas.**

The most famous work of this nature, however, is the collection of a clergyman—Richard Hakluyt, who died as Prebendary of Westminster in 1616. Hakluyt published ‘Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America,’ in 1582, which he followed sixteen years later by the first instalment of his chief work, ‘The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation,’ etc. Some of Hakluyt’s MS. came into the possession of the Rev. Samuel Purchas (d. 1626), who published three volumes entitled, ‘Purchas, his Pilgrimage, or Relations of the World,’ etc.; ‘Purchas, his Pilgrim, or the History of Man,’ etc.; ‘Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes.’ These rambling books are mines of curious information written in a quaint style by a singularly credulous and uncritical scholar (1613-25).

**Patriotism impelled John Stowe, a London tailor, to the Historians, loving, if uncritical, study of England’s past, etc.** which produced his ‘Annales; or, a General Chronicle of England.’ This work was first published in 1580, and was revised and ‘augmented’ by Howes in 1615.

**John Stowe** An earlier work of Stowe’s is his ‘Summary of English Chronicles’ (1561), and a more famous one his much-cited ‘Survey of London’ (1598), to which many later accounts of the Metropolis are indebted.

**John Speed** Another tailor-historian is John Speed, who is (d. 1629). praised for showing an unusual amount of discriminating scepticism in his ‘History of Great Britain under the Romans,’ etc., which was published in 1611. Speed also issued collections of maps and genealogies.

**Bacon, Raleigh, Daniel.** Among the historians, too, we must reckon Bacon, Raleigh, and Daniel, whose works in this department have already been touched on. A labourer in a cognate subject is the learned head-

**William Camden** master of Westminster, William Camden, whose (d. 1623). chief work is his ‘Britannia,’ a description (written in Latin) of the British Isles. He wrote other works, including some Latin ‘Annals.’

With the fierce dissensions of 'Churchmen' and 'Puritans' is connected a multitude of writings of all kinds, which includes Bacon's 'Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England' and Hooker's 'Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,' as well as the less valuable pamphlets both of and against 'Martin Marprelate.'

This was the pseudonym adopted by the author or authors of the most virulent attacks upon the episcopacy. The chief tracts bearing this signature have been imputed to certain well-known Puritans, such as Udall, Penry, and others; but the matter is surrounded with doubt. 'The Epistle,' one of the attacks that excited most notice, which appeared in 1588, was answered by Thomas Cooper, Bishop of London, in an 'Admonition to the People of England,' and this brought forth from the other side a retort entitled 'Hay (i.e. Have ye) any Work for the Cooper?' Champions of the Church party stepped forth to show the Martinists that coarseness, scurrilous invective, and unfairness were not the exclusive property of the Puritans, and attacks and counter-attacks multiplied rapidly. Lylly is thought by some to be the author of the anti-Martinist 'Pap with a Hatchet' and 'An Almond for a Parrot.' The latter and several others have also been attributed to Nash.

Controversy has been the making of our prose. To controversy we owe the prose of Wyclif and Pecock, and the Marprelate tracts carried on fitly their tradition. Abusive as they are, they are written in a clear style, and brought before the masses of the people the merits of knowing what you have to say and then saying it. The answers to Martin err in this respect, the professional theologians by pedantry and cloudiness, the professional pamphleteers by evading the point at issue and preferring frank abuse.

Probably the first attempt at a critical examination of the form of our poetry is to be found in the *Criticiana*. 'Notes of Instruction concerning the Making of Verse or Rhyme in English,' by George Gascoigne (p. 186); we have also seen Gabriel Harvey, Spenser, and their friends corresponding about the new method of versifying and related subjects. The first real contribu-

tion to our literature of criticism—and the only valuable one during this age—is Sidney's 'Apology for Poetry,' of which we have spoken in connection with his poetry. Of other and much less important works on the subject, we may mention William Webbe's 'Discourse of English Poetry,' published in 1586, and an <sup>Webbe,</sup> 'Art of English Poesie,' which appeared in Puttenham. 1589, and is attributed to George Puttenham: the former was the work of an advocate of the new versifying (p. 284), and a despiser of rhyme; the latter is mainly now interesting on account of the opinions of the value of English poetry contained in it. The poets Campion and

<sup>Campion,</sup> Daniel have also left writings on their art,—  
<sup>Daniel.</sup> the former in another 'Art of English Poesie' (see p. 334), in which he too showed his esteem for the 'classical' metres, which was answered in Daniel's 'Apology for Rhyme.' The best known work of Francis

<sup>Meres.</sup> Meres—familiar to 'every schoolboy' for its <sup>Meres.</sup> reference to Shakespeare—is his 'Palladis Tamia, or Wit's Treasury' (1598), which, though mainly a compilation of quotations from the ancients, is interesting in this connection for the essay on English authors compared with the classics and Italians which is prefixed to it.

John Florio's translation of Montaigne's 'Essays' (1603) <sup>Florio's</sup> was probably familiar to the author of 'The <sup>Montaigne.</sup> Tempest'; these had first appeared in 1580, and some think Bacon slightly indebted to them.

The weak point of the Elizabethan novel, which we discussed in Chapter X., was its lack of characterisation. Early in the seventeenth century we get the complement to the novel in sketches of typical characters independent of a plot, written for purposes of satire or moral training. The sketches, usually denominated 'Characters,' had their origin in the similar work of the Greek philosopher Theophrastus (? 372-287 B.C.). The satirist Joseph Hall, in his 'Characters of Virtues and Vices,' led the way in the Theophrastian Character-sketch, which was followed in England in 1614 by the more celebrated 'Characters or Witty Descriptions of the Properties of Sundry Persons,' accredited to Sir Thomas

Overbury, and published in the year following his murder in 1613. The most celebrated of all the imitators of Theophrastus is the Frenchman La Bruyère, who followed in the wake of Hall in 1688. Overbury was followed by Earle, for whom see p. 415. Overbury's 'Characters' are full of quaint and witty conceits, and foreshadow the greater work, work with more flesh and blood to it, of Addison and Steele. These early Character-sketches are important, as they showed the way for the first great writers of the modern novel. In fact, if an Elizabethan novelist had but taken the hint from the Shakespearean drama or from the 'Characters,' English literature would not have had to wait for Richardson and Fielding.

In 1621 was given to the world Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' a book hard to class and harder to describe. It is, as its name implies, a medical treatise, written by Robert Burton, who was a learned clergyman educated at Oxford and himself a great sufferer from melancholia. As a medical treatise there is a methodical classification of all the supposed causes of melancholia, but each section and subsection is packed with stores of quotations from every available source, the whole forming such a farrago of homely wit and recondite learning that it has been ever a favourite hunting-ground for the literary plunderer. The novelist Sterne took from it his out of the way learning for 'Tristram Shandy'; Milton derived the hint for his 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' from the verses Burton prefixed to his mighty tome. Charles Lamb naturally revelled in 'The Anatomy,' and a book which has provided delight and entertainment to such different men as Dr. Johnson, Southey, Coleridge, and Lord Byron, to mention only a few great names, must not be passed over in silence. It is not literature, but it contains literature and has given birth to literature.

Finally we come to what is in every way, whether judged by its style or influence, the greatest monument of the prose of the age, though of it we need say but little here—the translation of the Scriptures which was made by a company of divines under the King's authority and published in 1611. They

<sup>'The  
Authorised  
Version.'</sup>

took as the basis of their labours the then official version known as 'The Bishop's Bible' and made in 1568 under the superintendence of Archbishop Parker, which itself partly followed earlier versions. A consequence of this adhering to older translations appears in the archaic character of the language—which is, as Hallam says, 'not the English of Daniel, or Raleigh, or Bacon, as any one may easily perceive, but an idiom compounded of that of the time, and of that of the preceding century.'

The result of this blending is a style of English unsurpassed for its purpose, perhaps unsurpassable. The necessity of following closely the original languages through the reverence that was felt for the very words in which the thought was couched kept the translators both from attempting to parade their own learning and from indulging in the rambling formless sentences too characteristic of so many writers of their period. It is true that the translators were men of literary taste, but the contrast between what they *might* have done and what they did may be seen best if we set side by side a sentence from their Preface to King James and a sentence from their translation of the Sacred Volume:—

## PREFACE.

For whereas it was the expectation of many, who wished not well unto our Sion, that upon the setting of that bright Occidental Star, Queen Elizabeth of most happy memory, some thick and palpable clouds of darkness would so have overshadowed this Land, that men should have been in doubt which way they were to walk ; and that it should hardly be known, who was to direct the unsettled State ; the appearance of Your Majesty, as of the Sun in his strength, instantly dispelled those supposed and surmised mists, and gave unto all that were well affected exceeding cause of comfort ; especially when we beheld the Government established in Your Highness and Your hopeful Seed, by an undoubted Title, and this also accompanied with peace and tranquillity at home and abroad.

## TEXT.

And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind : and God saw that it was good.

Eloquent and learned as the translators were, one shudders to think how they, if unrestrained by the sacredness of the text, would have written about 'great whales.'

The grandeur and beauty of the Authorised Version are universally admitted, and, as we have said elsewhere, if everything owed to it in form, matter, colouring, and inspiration should be removed from our literature, the loss would be irreparable and far greater than is often imagined.

One other book of similar nature which has influenced the forms of our language greatly, but to a less extent our literature, is the 'Book of Common Prayer.' As it is in great part a translation from the Latin prayers of the Missal, Archbishop Cranmer (1489-1556), to whom we owe the greatest beauties of its language, had what would have appeared an impossible task to preserve in an uninflected language the richness and sonorous rhythm of the majestic Latin prayers. His successful accomplishment, due to the frequent use of synonyms and doublets (e.g. 'acknowledge and confess,' 'assembled and met together,' etc.), of paraphrase rather than translation, of inversions and other like devices, is one of the greatest *tours de force* in English literature.

The 'Book of Common Prayer,' great as it is in literary value, is after all the treasure of one creed : the Authorised Version is a national heritage ; it is the literary if not the spiritual treasure of the whole English race, of the myriads who have spoken or ever shall speak the English language. Of two volumes alone can this be written : the Bible secular and the Bible religious, Shakespeare and the Authorised Version.

## 'CHAPTER XXI.

THE PROSE (1625-1660<sup>1</sup>) : TAYLOR—BROWNE—FULLER—  
HOBBS—MINOR WRITERS.

IT is very common, and indeed convenient, in histories of literature to take one man or group of men as being responsible for some particular change in literature. Readers of histories like definite statements: that Columbus discovered America; that Stephenson invented the locomotive engine; that Newton discovered the law of gravity; that Dryden invented a modern prose style. Such statements are after all but rough generalisations, useful perhaps as boundary stones to mark out definite fields of knowledge, but strictly they are not scientific facts. At all events literary changes seem never due to one man alone, however much credit may be given him for hastening their development.

Pre-Restoration  
Prose in  
General.—  
The Coming  
Change.

Neither Dryden nor any of the post-Restoration writers invented our reasonable, sober, modern prose style. It was there all the time waiting for someone to use it for general everyday purposes, to let prose attend to its business without trespassing upon the domain of poetry, to keep it for telling a plain tale in a plain way. And this is the glory of Tillotson, Dryden, and the post-Restoration writers who followed them, not that they invented the modern prose style, but that they made it impossible for such great rebels as Dr. Johnson to lead us astray for long upon the old false rhetorical track.

That modern prose was ready to hand for Dryden's

<sup>1</sup> For Milton see Chapter XIX.

purpose may easily be seen by anyone who will take the trouble to open his 'Hamlet' or a copy of the Bible.

'Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded them : on the instant they got clear of our ship ; so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy : but they knew what they did ; I am to do a good turn for them.'

A literary captain of a modern merchantman after his adventure with a German submarine could not write a more straightforward and succinct account of what happened to him. If anyone *made* our prose it was Shakespeare and the Elizabethan dramatists. But there was an old, an obstinate tradition, which still prevails in the East, that the common colloquial language, however serviceable, is too low for high occasions, for set literary efforts. Literary men would persist in pranking up their prose in the peacock feathers of verse. And in spite of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, in spite of the Authorised Version, literary men did not till after the Restoration learn the secret that colloquial speech should be the basis of a good prose style suitable to the everyday purposes of life.

Cowley in his Essays (see p. 362), written after the Restoration, exhibits a curious blend of the two styles, the Shakespearean colloquial with the pompous classical, the former tending to prevail : the eminent writers criticised in this chapter are still seeking but have not yet found the pedestrian gait of prose, Browne the prose-poet least of all, Hobbes the philosopher coming very near to it.

We shall see from this chapter that there is a change coming gradually but surely over the spirit of our prose, and we shall see too what this change is when we reach Dryden's 'Essay of Dramatic Poesy' (1667), which, as an eminent critic remarks, 'is a model of the new prose, newer even than Cowley's, and removed almost by centuries from the style of such still living men as Browne and Milton.' He might have added that it was old as well as new, for it is the colloquial prose of Shakespeare turned into a maid-of-all-work.

One of the greatest prose writers of the age is the eloquent divine who towards the close of his life became Bishop of Down, and afterwards of Dromore. Born of humble parents (his father was a barber) at Cambridge, he was admitted into holy orders, after education at the Perse School and Caius College there, and gained the favourable notice of Archbishop Laud by a sermon preached before him; through his influence he obtained a fellowship at All Souls', Oxford, in 1636, and was appointed two years later to the rectory of Uppingham, of which, however, he was deprived soon after the outbreak of the Civil War. During the triumph of the Parliamentary party he lived in retirement, and more than once underwent imprisonment; it was during this time that the bulk of his work was written. Shortly after the Restoration he received a small preferment in Ireland, and subsequently the advancement mentioned above.

Among the chief of Taylor's numerous writings are 'Holy Living,' and 'Holy Dying,' 'The Great Exemplar,' 'The Golden Grove,' and 'Ductor Dubitantium,' which were all written between 1645 and 1660. His earliest publication, however, was 'Episcopacy Asserted,' which appeared in 1643. In all his work the most striking literary qualities are the musical cadence of the sentences, the wealth of illustration and brilliant imagery, and most touching pathos. His sentences are often long, as is the case with all the writers of this age who produce harmonious rhetorical periods, occasionally unwieldy after the fashion of the time, sometimes ungrammatical in structure.

It is, as Heber says, 'on devotional and moral subjects that the peculiar character of his mind is most, and most successfully, developed. To this service he devotes his most glowing language; to this his aptest illustrations: his thoughts and his words at once burst into a flame when touched by the coals of this altar, and whether he describes the duties, or dangers, or hopes of man, or the mercy, power, and justice of the Most High; whether he exhorts or instructs his brethren, or offers up

his supplications in their behalf to the common Father of all, his conceptions and his expressions belong to the loftiest and most sacred poetry, of which they only want . . . the name and the metrical arrangement. It is this distinctive excellence, still more than the other qualifications of learning and logical acuteness, which has placed him, even in that age of gigantic talent, on an eminence superior to any of his immediate contemporaries, . . . and has seated him, by the almost unanimous estimate of posterity, on the same lofty elevation with Hooker.<sup>1</sup> The following excerpt (from 'Holy Dying') may give an idea of his style:—

'Truth is there are but two great periods in which faith demonstrates itself to be a powerful and mighty grace ; and they are persecution and the approaches of death, for the passive part ; and a temptation, for the active. In the day of pleasure and the night of pain, faith is to fight her *agonisticon*, to contend for mastery ; and faith overcomes all alluring and fond temptations to sin, and faith overcomes all our weaknesses and faintings in our troubles. By the faith of the promises we learn to despise the world, choosing those objects which faith discovers ; and by expectation of the same promises we are comforted in all our sorrows, and enabled to look through and see beyond the cloud : but the vigour of it is pressed and called forth when all our fine discourses come to be reduced to practice. For in our health and clearer days it is easy to talk of putting trust in God : we readily trust Him for life when we are in health ; for provisions, when we have fair revenues ; and for deliverance, when we are newly escaped : but let us come to sit upon the margin of our grave, and let a tyrant lean hard upon our fortunes and dwell upon our wrong ; let the storm arise, and the keels toss till the cordage crack, or that all our hopes bulge under us and descend into the hollowness of sad misfortunes ; then can you believe, when you neither hear, nor see, nor feel anything but objections ? This is the proper work of sickness ; faith is then brought into the theatre,

<sup>1</sup> 'And with Barrow,' adds Heber, though from a purely literary point of view probably very few would admit Barrow's right to be mentioned with Taylor. 'Of such a triumvirate,' he continues, 'who shall settle the precedence ? Yet it may perhaps be not far from the truth to observe that Hooker claims the foremost rank in sustained and classic dignity of style, in political and pragmatical wisdom ; that to Barrow the praise must be assigned of the closest and clearest views, and of a taste the most controlled and chastened ; but that in imagination, in interest, in that which most properly and exclusively deserves the name of genius, Taylor is to be placed before either. The first awes most, the second convinces most, the third persuades and delights most. Hooker is the object of our reverence, Barrow of our admiration, and Jeremy Taylor of our love.'

and so exercised that if it abides but to the end of the contention we may see the work of faith which God will largely crown. . . . It was the fire that did honour to Mutius Scaevola, poverty made Fabricius famous, Rutilius was made excellent by banishment, Regulus by torments, Socrates by prison, Cato by his death ; and God hath crowned the memory of Job with a wreath of glory because he sat upon his dunghill wisely and temperately, and his potsherds and his groans mingled with praises and justifications of God pleased Him like an anthem sung by angels in the morning of the Resurrection.'

Of other theological writers whose works fall within this *Theologians.* period one of the most important is Chillingworth, whose chief work is 'The Religion of

*William Chilling- worth, 1602-1644.* Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation' (1637), written in answer to the work of a Jesuit,

*Knott.* This book, which by its clarity of style and the crispness of its sentences has little to learn even from Dryden, has as its central thought that 'the Bible only is the religion of Protestants.' 'His chief excellency,' says Hallam, 'is the close reasoning which avoids every dangerous admission, and yields to no ambiguous- ness of language. He perceived and maintained with great courage (considering the times in which he wrote, and the temper of those whom he was not unwilling to keep as friends) his favourite tenet, that all things necessary to be believed are clearly laid down in Scripture.'

*John Hales.* His friend Hales (1584-1656), 'the ever- memorable,' declaims even more emphatically in his tract on 'Schism' (1628) against the setting up of church authority as absolute; his 'Golden Remains' were collected and published in 1659. The 'Exposition of the

*Pearson, 1612-1686.* Apostles' Creed' (1659) by John Pearson (1612-1686), Bishop of Chester, is remarkable for 'On the Creed.' learning and sense, and 'is a standard book in English divinity.' Pearson succeeded in the See of Chester

*Bishop Wilkins.* the ingenious Dr. John Wilkins (1614-1672), who left behind him an unfinished work on the

'Principles and Duties of Natural Religion,' and is remembered for his attempt, in 'A Discovery of a New World' (1638), to show that the moon may be inhabited, and might possibly be reached, as well as for his

support of the new theory (1640) that 'our earth is one of the planets,' and for his 'Essay towards . . . a Philosophical Language.' Of the non-conforming writers the

Richard Baxter, 1615-1691. chief is Baxter, who after taking Anglican

orders found himself forced by conscience to side with the Parliamentarians; of the vast number of books which he wrote the chief are 'The Saint's Everlasting Rest' (1650) and 'A Call to the Unconverted' (1657). The former was for many years the favourite book of devotion of the English peasantry, few cottages not possessing a copy of it and of 'The Pilgrim's Progress.'

Sir Thomas Browne, 1605-1682 'The novelty of paradoxes, the dignity of sentiment, the quick succession of images, the multitude of abstruse allusions, the subtlety of disquisitions, and the strength of language' are the causes which Johnson enumerates as having attracted the attention of the public to the appearance of the 'Religio Medici.' Browne, its author, was the son of a London merchant; after education at Winchester and Oxford, he continued his studies on the Continent, and returned to England with the title of doctor of medicine, which he obtained at Leyden. His 'Religio Medici,' as the following extract shows, was written about 1635, and a MS. copy was sent to the printers without his permission in 1642, being followed by the authorised edition in the next year. The book was at once immensely popular not only at home, but also on the Continent, for it was promptly translated into Latin; it was the exposition of the tolerant, poetic Christianity of a student of science and a lover of harmony in nature, art, and life:—

'Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable. For the world, I count it not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in. The world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on: for the other, I use it like a globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and fortunes, do err in my altitude; for I am above Atlas's shoulders. The earth is a point not only in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us. That mass of flesh that circumscribes me limits not my mind. That surface that tells the heavens it hath an end

cannot persuade me I have any. I take my circle to be above three hundred and sixty. Though the number of the aro do measure my body, it comprehendeth not my mind. Whilst I study to find how I am a microcosm, or little world, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity in us; something that was before the elements, and owes no homage under the sun. Nature tells me I am the image of God, as well as Scripture. He that understands not thus much hath not his introduction or first lesson, and is yet to begin the alphabet of man.'

This is a good sample of Browne at his lowest flight. He soars at times much higher than this, as in the famous purple patches in 'Urn-burial.' Browne's is a great, a musical prose, far less unwieldy than Milton's, but still too learned, too subtle, and too recondite for ordinary uses. It may be regarded as an anticipatory protest against the excessive plainness of the Dryden school of prose writers, a protest which was to be echoed or rather reverberated by Dr. Johnson when the great fault of the new prose became apparent, the tendency to be careless and slipshod.

Browne settled as a medical practitioner at Norwich about 1637, and spent the remainder of his life there. In 1646 appeared his 'Pseudodoxia Epidemica ; or, Enquiries into Vulgar Errors.' Those who have once caught the infection of Browne's singular charm, and among them are to be counted some of the greatest names of our literature, would dispense gladly with many greater books from their shelves could they but retain the 'Vulgar Errors.' Yet some may be found to agree with this somewhat chilling criticism from his otherwise warm admirer, John Addington Symonds : 'Pseudodoxia is not a book to read through now. We may turn its pages over for our recreation. We can dip into it profitably here and there. It will amuse us to study the old lore of griffins and mandrakes, mistletoe and laurel, the phoenix and the salamander. We shall be interested to find why Jews do not stink, and what is the superstition of saluting after sneezing, wherefore negroes are black, what was then thought about gipsies, . . . In a word, the book deals with the obsolete curiosities of an antiquated cabinet.' Those who love Browne will see in this criticism only the baneful effect of modern science upon a good man of letters.

Twelve years later came 'his best-written work,' viz. '*Hydriotaphia; or, Urn-burial*,' a little casket filled with the most delightful gems of prose-poetry. His other writings are not very important—'*The Garden of Cyrus*' (a fantastic learned treatise on the mystic imports of the quincunx and the number five), 1658, and a work on '*Christian Morals*' published posthumously, with some charming private letters.

'No syllable in any of his writings,' says the great critic we have just quoted, 'notwithstanding their profound and penetrative meditations upon vicissitudes in human lives and empires, betrays the author's partisanship in the tragedy enacted on the world's great stage around him. His thoughts on these subjects quietly rested, like the bones discovered by him at Great Walsingham, "under the drums and tramplings of three conquests." This is the proper attitude of one not called by station to control the body politic, but destined by genius to the humbler function of securing an immortality of literary fame.'

While it is admitted that Browne uses Latinisms too fondly and freely, or rather words coined by himself from Latin, he is generally praised for the almost constant high level of a style pervaded by lofty serenity and calm majesty, and expressed in rhythmical periods rising again and again to sublime heights of eloquence and imagery; and great is the influence he has exercised over such later writers as Johnson, Lamb, Southey, Coleridge, Carlyle.

Another 'quaint' writer, but simpler, homelier, less poetic than Browne, is Thomas Fuller, the son of a Northamptonshire clergyman, who entered the Church in 1630, on completing his education at Cambridge. A little later he obtained a prebend in the diocese of Salisbury, and (in 1634) the living of Broadwindsor in Dorsetshire. Both these preferments he relinquished soon after the outbreak of the Civil War, and, coming to London, acted for a time as preacher to the Inns of Court, and then as curate of the Savoy (1641-3).

A Royalist in sympathy, his cast of mind inclined him ever towards moderation, and he managed without servility or want of principle to keep on fairly good terms

Thomas  
Fuller.  
1608-1661.

with both parties, though he had been fined £200 by the Long Parliament in 1640, and though his dislike to over-puritanism forced him to leave London for a time in 1643. He went to the King at Oxford, acted as chaplain to one of his generals, and was in the Royalist garrison that surrendered at Exeter in 1646. After the execution of the King, he found friends and patrons among the more moderate of the Parliamentarians, obtained some preferment, and continued to write diligently. At the Restoration he recovered his Salisbury prebend and his Savoy curacy, but did not live long to enjoy them, dying in 1661, his most famous work, 'The History of the Worthies of England,' being published in the year following.

Fuller's volumes are many, but perhaps only the one just mentioned is now read by any but students. Besides this and some verse in no way remarkable, and many sermons,—he was one of the most popular preachers of his age,—he is the author of the following descriptive works: 'The History of the Holy War' (1639), 'A Pisgah-Sight of Palestine' (1650), and 'The Church History of Britain' (1655).

'The writings of Fuller,' says Lamb, 'are usually designated by the title of *quaint*, and with sufficient reason; for such was his natural bias to "conceits," that I doubt not upon most occasions it would have been going out of his way to have expressed himself out of them. But his art is not always a *lumen siccum*, a dry faculty of surprising; on the contrary, his conceits are oftentimes deeply steeped in human feeling and passion. Above all, his way of telling a story, for its eager liveliness, and the perpetual running commentary of the narrator happily blended with the narration, is perhaps unequalled.' Coleridge observes that 'Wit was the stuff and substance of Fuller's intellect. . . . the element, the earthen base, the material which he worked in, and this very circumstance has defrauded him of his due praise for the practical wisdom of the thoughts, for the beauty and variety of the truths, into which he shaped the stuff.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> He adds: 'Fuller was incomparably the most sensible, the least prejudiced great man of an age that boasted a galaxy of great men. He is a very voluminous writer, and yet in all his numerous volumes, on so many different subjects, it is

A good example of the pregnancy of Fuller's wit is his well-known description of a negro as 'the image of God cut in ebony.' Of a certain type of missionary endeavour he asks, 'Is there no way to bring home a wandering sheep but by worrying him to death?' The quaintness of his comment upon St. Paul's 'Let not the sun go down on your wrath' greatly 'arrided' Lamb: 'Yef let us take the Apostle's meaning rather than his words . . . not understanding him so literally, that we may take leave to be angry till sunset: then might our wrath lengthen with the days; and men in Greenland, where the day lasts above a quarter of a year, have plentiful scope for revenge.' As Lamb says, 'This whimsical presentation of a consequence which no one would have thought of deducing . . . could never have entered a head less entertainingly constructed than that of Fuller or Sir Thomas Browne, the very air of whose style the conclusion of this passage most aptly imitates'

We take a short citation from the 'Worthies'.—

'Shakespeare.—Add to all these, that though his genius generally was jocular, and inclining him to festivity, yet he could (when so disposed) be solemn and serious, as appears by his tragedies; so that Heraclitus himself (I mean if secret and unseen) might afford to smile at his comedies, they were so merry; and Democritus scarce forbear to sigh at his tragedies, they were so mournful.'

'He was an eminent instance of the truth of that rule, *Poeta non fit sed nascitur* (one is not made but born a poet). Indeed his learning was very little; so that as Cornish diamonds are not polished by any lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they are taken out of the earth, so Nature itself was all the art which was used upon him.'

'Many were the wit combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson; which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war: Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning; solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man of war, lesser in bulk but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention.'

After Browne and Fuller we may perhaps best consider

scarcely too much to say that you will hardly find a page in which some one sentence out of every three does not deserve to be quoted for itself—as motto or as maxim.'

the works of certain writers of essays, of history, and of semi-philosophical and miscellaneous works, most of which are distinguished for erudition.

The work by which Earle is known is entitled 'Microcosmographie,' which is explained further as 1661-1665. 'A Piece of the World discovered in Essays and Characters.' The book was published in 1628, fourteen years after the appearance of Sir Thomas Overbury's 'Characters,' to which it owes its form, consisting as it does of sketches of typical representatives of various callings, classes of society, 'humours,' etc. 'Earle is always gay and quick to catch the ridiculous, especially that of exterior appearances,' says Hallam: 'his style is short, describing well with a few words, but with much of the affected quaintness of that age. It is one of those books which give us a picturesque idea of the manners of our fathers.' As an illustration of Earle's style and of 'Characters' in general we quote here part of his description of 'A Mere Young Gentleman of the University,' i.e. a typical undergraduate:—

'A mere young Gentleman of the University is one that comes there to wear a gown, and to say hereafter he has been at the University. His father sent him thither, because he heard there were the best fencing and dancing schools, from these he has his education, from his tutor the oversight. The first element of his knowledge is to be shown the colleges, and initiatized in a tavern by the way, which hereafter he will learn of himself. The two marks of his seniority is the bare velvet of his gown, and his proficiency at tennis, where when he can once play a set, he is a freshman no more. His study has commonly handsome shelves, his books peal silk strings, which he shows to his father's man, and is loth to untie or take down for fear of misplacing. Upon foul days for recreation he retires thither, and looks over the pretty book his tutor reads to him, which is commonly some short history, or a piece of Euphormio; for which his tutor gives him money to spend next day. His main loitering is at the library, where he studies arms and books of honour, and turns a gentleman critic in pedigrees. Of all things he endures not to be mistaken for a scholar, and hates a black suit though it be of satin. . . . His companion is ordinarily some stale fellow, that has been notorious for an ingle to gold hatbands' (i.e. as a turfhunter).

Another book of essays of a different kind is the 'Resolves' of Owen Feltham (d. 1677). In these, 'Divine,

Moral, and Political' difficulties are 'resolved' (*i.e.* explained) by the writer in a series of Baconian 'Resolves,' essays, with no grace of style, much pedantry, 1627-8. and little vigour. Hallam considers his popularity to have been due to the fact that 'the moral reflections of a serious and thoughtful mind are generally pleasing.'

Like these two writers, Selden is mainly known to John Selden, English readers as the author of one book, and 1584-1634. that of the 'short-essay' type. This is his 'Table Talk,' which was edited after his death by his friend Milward, and consists of the acute scholar's pithy remarks on 'Various Matters of Weight and High Consequence.' Selden is among the historians by his 'History of Tithes' (1618), and so is Lord Herbert of Cherbury (Edward

<sup>Herbert of</sup> Herbert) by his 'Life and Reign of King Cherbury, Henry VIII.' (pub. 1649), which Hallam describes as 'a book of good authority, relatively at least to any that preceded, and written in a manly and judicious spirit.' Some other writers of historical books

<sup>Baker's</sup> may just be mentioned here, among them Sir <sup>Chronicle,</sup> Richard Baker, whose 'Chronicle of the Kings 1643. of England from the Earliest Days' is practically the last of this species of history-writing. The reader will remember that this was one of the books 'which always lay in the hall window' of Sir Roger de Coverley. This Chronicle History ends with the death of James I., but was continued by Edward Phillips, the nephew of Milton. Sir William Dugdale (1605-1686), if

<sup>Dugdale.</sup> his place in literature is small, claims notice from scholars as the author of 'Monasticon Anglicanum,' 'The History of St. Paul's,' and other antiquarian works. But leaving these and omitting the prose of Milton and Cowley, which is dealt with elsewhere, we go to the last great name on our list, Hobbes, after first touching on two minor writers, both of some importance, viz. Howell and Walton.

Howell, who wrote a large number of works of various kinds,—the list embraces grammar, verse, history, biography, allegorical fiction, 'instructions for foreign travel,' etc.,—is remembered for his

<sup>James Howell,</sup> 1594-1668.

letters, published as 'Epistolae Ho-elianae' (1645-55) : he had travelled abroad, and seen much and reflected, and as he has a pleasant lively style these letters are entertaining reading.

Walton has written at least one book which seems to have taken a place in our literature as a minor classic : this is 'The Complete Angler; or, The Contemplative Man's Recreation,' which appeared in 1653 ; 'its simplicity, its sweetness, its natural grace and happy intermixture of graver strains with the precepts of angling, have rendered this book deservedly popular' ; one feels after reading it a kind of personal affection for the gentle, 'contemplative' author. He also wrote 'Lives' of Donne, Wotton, Hooker, Herbert, and Sanderson (1640-78), which are interesting and valuable.

Hobbes, who was born in the year of the Armada, began to come before the public as a philosophical writer in the year 1647 with the Latin 'De Cive,' which had been circulated privately before, and was translated into English in 1651. In the last-mentioned year appeared his most famous work, 'Leviathan ; or, The Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil.' In this book, issued so short a time after the execution of Charles I., he boldly utters his views of the rights of kings and peoples in passages such as this, which we select (from Part II. of 'Leviathan') as an example of his style :—

*'The sovereign's actions cannot be justly accused by the subject.—Fourthly, because every subject is by this institution author of all the actions and judgments of the sovereign instituted ; it follows that whatsoever he doth, it can be no injury to any of his subjects ; nor ought he to be by any of them accused of injustice. For he that doth anything by authority from another, doth therein no injury to him by whose authority he acted : but by this institution of a commonwealth, every particular man is author of all the sovereign doth : and consequently he that complaineth of injury from his sovereign, complaineth of that whereof he himself is author ; and therefore ought not to accuse any man but himself ; no, nor himself of injury ; because to do injury to one's self is impossible. It is true that they that have sovereign power may*

committing iniquity ; but not injustice, or injury in the proper signification.

*Whatever the sovereign doth is unpunishable by the subject.—* Fifthly, and consequently to that which was said last, no man that hath sovereign power can justly be put to death, or otherwise in any manner by his subjects punished. For seeing every subject is author of the actions of his sovereign, he punisheth another for the actions committed by himself.'

The works of Hobbes, besides those already mentioned, include a treatise of 'Liberty and Necessity' (1654), as well as a translation of Thucydides in 1628 and a translation of Homer into English verse fifty years later, and 'Behemoth, a History of the Civil Wars,' published posthumously ; he also left autobiographical Latin verses.

Hobbes was born at Malmesbury, and, after leaving Oxford at the age of about twenty, travelled on the Continent with the heir of the Earl of Devonshire, with whose family he was closely connected from then till the end of his long life. He was a student his whole life through, and, as his works show, a loving reader of Greek, a practised writer in Latin, and a constant worker in philosophy and science, as befitted the friend of Ben Jonson, of Bacon, and of Galileo.

His political views naturally brought him into disfavour with anti-Royalists, and his philosophical ideas were the cause of his being looked on as a foe to religion, so that in 1651, after ten or eleven years spent among the leaders of thought in Paris, he seems to have apprehended more danger from persecution by theologians there than from politicians in England. He accordingly returned to this country, and there spent the remainder of his life, receiving a pension from the King after the Restoration, and living under the aegis of the Devonshire family.

With regard to Hobbes's place in pure literature, it is to be remarked that his English prose is distinguished by its clearness, vigour, and precision, at a time when the first and third of these qualities were uncommon. With none of the impassioned fervour and rhythmical eloquence of some of his great contemporaries, he is entirely free from

their accompanying faults of involved constructions and wearisome periods. He rarely indulges in decorations of any sort; his similes and illustrations are merely for the purpose of making his meaning clear by examples, not of adorning his pages; his constant endeavour is to be perfectly lucid, and he finds his way to achieve this by restricting the flow of words and using them with absolute accuracy. If some great stylists may be figured as having aimed at painting in words, we may conceive Hobbes as using the same instruments for diagrams. What he has to say he will put, as far as he can, in language as direct, definite, and logical as that of geometry; hence terseness and solid strength are his chief merits as a stylist, and perhaps nearly the sum of them. But this is much, when we consider both the need of these qualities in those days and the influence that their importation into literary prose exercised over the writers immediately succeeding.

With regard to his place as a philosopher, there is little that can be said to advantage in these pages; the two following paragraphs from Hallam give the views of one qualified to judge, though his dicta have naturally not passed unchallenged:—

‘ In nothing does Hobbes deserve more credit than in having set an example of close observation in the philosophy of the human mind. If he errs, he errs like a man who goes a little out of the right track, not like one who has set out on a wrong one. The eulogy of Stewart on Descartes, that he was the father of the experimental psychology, cannot be strictly wrested from him by Hobbes, inasmuch as the publications of the former are of an earlier date; but we may fairly say that the latter began as soon and prosecuted his inquiries further. It seems natural to presume that Hobbes, who is said to have been employed by Bacon in translating some of his works into Latin, had at least been led by him to the inductive process which he has more than any other employed. But he has seldom mentioned his predecessor’s name; and, indeed, his mind was of a different stamp—less excursive, less quick in discovering analogies, and less fond of reasoning from them; but more close, perhaps more patient,

and more apt to follow up a predominant idea, which sometimes becomes one of the *idola specus*<sup>1</sup> that deceive him

'The political system of Hobbes, like his moral system, of which, in fact, it is only a portion, sears up the heart. It takes away the sense of wrong that has consoled the wise and good in their dangers, the proud appeal of innocence under oppression, like that of Prometheus to the elements, uttered to the witnessing world, to coming ages, to the just ear of Heaven. It confounds the principles of moral approbation, the notions of good and ill desert, in a servile idolatry of the monstrous Leviathan it creates, and, after sacrificing all right at the altar of power, denies to the Omnipotent the prerogative of dictating the laws of His own worship.'

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<sup>1</sup> 'Idols of the Cave,' see p. 394

## CHAPTER XXII.

### SURVEY OF THE YEARS 1660 TO 1700.

THE literary history of the period that lies between the Restoration and the beginning of the eighteenth century is very largely the history of Dryden and his works. He is the greatest of the men of letters whose work was mainly done in that epoch, and it is in his writings that the chief tendencies of the literature of the day are most completely and clearly seen. If we had to confine ourselves to the careful study of the works of one author alone in this period, we should of course take Milton, if choice of the greatest writer then living had to be made; but if we made our selection with a view to getting the representative writer of the age, we should do far better to take Dryden.

Milton's greatest work was done after the Restoration, <sup>Milton,</sup> it is true, but Milton, as we have seen, is to <sup>d. 1674</sup> be classed—if classed at all—with the direct descendants of the Elizabethans and the men of the Commonwealth, not with the writers and thinkers of the era that opens (as far as a date can fix such things) with the Restoration. From the new men he learned nothing, and it was long before anything that influenced literature was learned of him. The mere fact that his blank verse found no imitators among lesser writers in his day, is striking enough proof of the want of sympathy between him and his later contemporaries. It may be that men admired Milton, but it is certain that it was Dryden whom they understood and loved—he learned from his age and taught it, interpreting it to itself after fashions it appreciated and itself employed to the best of its ability. He spoke its own dialect with all its peculiarities, where Milton spoke the noble language of universal poetry in all its purity.

his thoughts and the subject of them were bounded by the interests of those about him, and narrowed to his own day and place, where Milton's knew no confines of space or time. Hence, though Milton 'was not of an age but for all time,' Dryden, whether or not he was for 'all time'—and one must surely be prejudiced to think that he was—was very certainly the man of his age. And in considering this age of Dryden's, we may almost leave Milton out of count.<sup>1</sup>

From what we have said, it will follow that the chief characteristics of the literary work of the time may be studied in the writings of Dryden; it will, however, be convenient to consider some of these in bare outline before making such a study. First and foremost, we may remind our readers of a change that we noticed in the form and spirit of much of our poetry during the preceding part of the century. We find Dryden saluting Waller and Denham as the first who taught the proper ways of handling English verse; we find Pope repeating the compliment with emphasis; Prior telling us that 'Denham and Waller improved our versification, and Dryden perfected it'; and even Dr. Johnson (in 1779) describing Denham as 'one of the fathers of English poetry.' If we seek the reasons of the great estimation in which these now little read poets were held by Dryden and his successors, we find that this was due to the fact that they were credited with introducing art and polish into our verse and getting rid of the irregularities and licence with which it was formerly written—with being, in fact, the founders of what we call the 'Classic' school.

The outward distinction between the 'Classic' and the 'Romantic' poet is the way in which each handles metre, and for the purposes of this book we may confine ourselves to the treatment of one particular form of it—the decasyllabic rhyming couplet, which became almost distinctive of the classic school.

The Classic versifier practically made a stanza of every

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of Milton's works after 1660 (viz. 'Paradise Lost,' 'Paradise Regained,' and 'Samson Agonistes') the reader is referred to Chapter XIX. (p. 367). Of poems in blank verse which may be attributed to Milton's example the only one in this age that need be mentioned is Roscommon's 'Art of Poetry' (1680).

two lines ; he did not let the sense and grammatical structure of one couplet run on into the next without a very definite break at the end of the second line, and he closed each separate line as far as possible with a natural pause ; he avoided lines of more than ten syllables, and he adhered to the normal type of the decasyllabic line (five iambic) as nearly as can be done in English verse. The Romantic writer, on the other hand, constantly makes use of the overflow [*enjambement*] from one line and one couplet to another, and is at no pains to make a pause at the close of a line ; and he generally regards number of accents so much more than number of syllables, that lines of more than ten syllables are tolerably frequent. A specimen or two of each will make this difference in form obvious at once. Let us take a few lines from Ben Jonson :—

' And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,  
 From thence to honour thee, I would not seek  
 For names, but call forth thundering Aeschylus,  
 Euripides and Sophocles to us,  
 Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,  
 To life again, to hear thy buskin tread  
 And shake a stage ; or when thy socks were on,  
 Leave thee alone for a comparison  
 Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome  
 Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.  
 Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,  
 To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.  
 He was not of an age, but for all time !  
 And all the Muses still were in their prime,  
 When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm  
 Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm ! '

Or again, as better illustrating 'irregular' pauses and overflows, let us consider these lines of Chapman's :—

' Lately in Delos (with a charge of men  
 Arrived, that rendered me most wretched then,  
 Now making me thus naked), I beheld  
 The burthen of a palm, whose issue swelled  
 About Apollo's fane, and that put on  
 A grace like thee ; for Earth had never none  
 Of all her sylvan issue so adorned.  
 Into amaze my very soul was turned,  
 To give it observation ; as now thee  
 To view, O virgin, a stupidity

' Past admiration strikes me, joined with fear  
 To do a suppliant's due, and press so near  
 As to embrace thy knees.'

If we compare these lines with a specimen of Waller's work, we can see easily enough the meaning of Dryden's saying, that Waller 'first made writing easily an art, first showed us to conclude the sense most commonly in distichs [couplets], which in the verse of those before him runs on for so many lines together that the reader is out of breath to overtake it.' We have already quoted a few lines from both Denham and Waller which may be profitably contrasted with the above<sup>1</sup>; but it will be convenient to give a little further example of these early writers of 'correct' verse here. This is from Waller's jubilation 'On the Prince's escape at St. Andero,' and it is given merely as an illustration of the treatment of the metre:—

' While to his harp divine Arion sings  
 The loves and conquests of our Albion kings ;  
 Of the fourth Edward was his noble song,  
 Fierce, goodly, valiant, beautiful, and young ;  
 He rent the crown from vanquished Edward's head,  
 Raised the white rose, and trampled on the red ;  
 Till Love triumphing o'er the victor's pride,  
 Brought Mars and Warwick to the conquered side.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Ah ! spare your sword, where beauty is to blame,  
 Love gave the affront, and must repair the same,  
 When France shall boast of her whose conquering eyes  
 Have made the best of English hearts their prize.'

And this is from Denham's 'Cooper's Hill':—

' Under his proud survey the city lies,  
 And like a mist beneath a hill doth rise,  
 Whose state and wealth, the business and the crowd,  
 Seems at this distance but a darker cloud,  
 And is to him who rightly things esteems,  
 No other in effect but what it seems.'

It is with Pope that we find the most finely finished workmanship of this classical couplet, as the reader may see by turning to the numerous extracts given in Chapter XXVIII.;

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I., pp. 355, 364-5.

but Pope undoubtedly learned his art of poetry, as far as verse-making is concerned, from Dryden. Dryden, as we see, owned his indebtedness to certain earlier poets ; but it was in his hands that the couplet was raised to the exalted and dignified position that it held for more than a century, during a large part of which it was the chief and almost the only metre employed for metrical work of any pretension outside song-writing.

The popularity of the classic couplet, the greater importance attached to adherence to definite rules of construction, and the horror in which all kinds of extravagance (in literature) were held by the men of this era were largely the result of a revolt and reaction against the excesses of the age immediately preceding, in which rant and bombast and exaggeration had endeavoured to supply the place of the vanished Elizabethan fervour. The tendency to make war on this was further helped by the

<sup>French</sup> example and precept of contemporary French writers, whose works most of the English authors of the day knew more or less familiarly, and admired. The reaction was inevitable, but it was more speedy and thorough in its effects owing to this foreign influence. And both tendencies served to banish the far-fetched 'conceits,' the strange analogies and combinations of odd images, the gaudy ornaments and astonishing coin-

<sup>End of the</sup> parisons that were so popular from Donne to Cowley, and that mark and mar Dryden's <sup>'Metaphysical School.'</sup> earliest work : the 'metaphysical school' practically disappeared at the Restoration.

The same feelings and influences that caused the popularity of the classic metre must be held in large part responsible for a certain change in subject-matter. The generation that set such store in its versification on neatness and careful regard of convention, terseness and finish, polish and balance, demanded from its poets sobriety and lucidity, thoughtfulness and acuteness, and many of the qualities that we are accustomed to associate more peculiarly with prose. Hence the so-called 'Age of Prose and Reason' gives us freely the philosophical and didactic essay, the

satire, 'and the pointed epigram, for all of which the 'Classic' couplet seems a singularly appropriate vehicle. It rather avoids those stronger and deeper passions or more thrilling emotions which we are apt to look upon as the proper province of poetry. If it deals with them, it generally treats them in a more restrained—possibly in a more prosaic—way than the sixteenth or the nineteenth century approves of. Perhaps it may assist to the understanding of the difference between the Classic and Romantic treatment to consider what happens in each case in incompetent hands: the Romantic writer of the feebler sort becomes hysterical, involved, noisy and vulgar; the Classic becomes dull, prosy, monotonous.

It follows, almost as a matter of course, from what has been said, that one mark of the blighting dominion of the classic ideal is the gradual decay and virtual extinction of lyric poetry, in which our literature before the Restoration is rich beyond expression. It is true that in Dryden the lyric spirit still survives with vigour and intensity, but by the time of Pope it has almost wholly disappeared, and lies dormant until galvanised into new life by Collins and Gray.<sup>1</sup>

Before passing on to a general consideration of the prose <sup>Chief Poetical</sup> and the drama in this period, we will mention <sup>Writers,</sup> here the names of the chief poetical writers <sup>1660-1700.</sup> whose works we must shortly proceed to study in some detail. Apart from Milton's, there is, as we have said, no poetry written during this period which has an undisputed claim to a place in the literature of the world. But if there is little great poetry, there is plenty of first-rate verse, which in the work of Dryden, at any rate, rises into the former category at times. The Restoration itself was the signal for a swarm of odes upon the 'Blessed Return' (Cowley), 'Astrea Redux' (Dryden), etc., etc., which are chiefly notable for their inferiority to their authors' previous productions on the other side.

Of the older generation of Cavalier poets, Waller and Denham were the sole survivors, and their literary activity

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<sup>1</sup> The extent of this decay may perhaps best be gauged by a glance through the Third Book of the 'Golden Treasury.'

was over; but the younger generation, 'the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease,' included Dorset, Rochester, Roscommon, and Mulgrave. Cowley, Waller, and Herrick all lived for some years after the Restoration; but the two latter wrote no more, while Cowley's best work after 1660 is in prose. Marvell's poetry, too, mostly belongs to an earlier date, though he wrote satires in verse and prose down to his death in 1678. Two other metrical satirists besides Marvell and Dryden will also demand our notice—viz. Butler and Oldham; and these are virtually all the poets with whom we have to concern ourselves before the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The time of the later Stuarts is richer in good stage plays than any other period in the history of our literature, except the Elizabethan. The Court patronised the theatre eagerly, and the public, long debarred from this form of amusement, flocked to it again. The drama was no longer, as before, the outburst of national feeling, the expression of all that was strongest in the nation's life, it is true; but it attracted to itself many of the most cultivated, the most intelligent, the wittiest men of the time. It lacked the high seriousness, the intense passion of the great Romantic age; and with a large section it never took its place again either as a legitimate amusement or as an elevating form of literature, because of its licentiousness and its levity. These qualities, on the other hand, were exactly what found favour with a considerable portion, and not more with the Court—'which is the best and surest judge of writing,' according to Dryden—than with all who hated, or were sick of, Puritanism and everything that savoured of it.

The patrons of the theatre did not seek to be deeply stirred, or moved to laughter by the humour that lies next to tears. They liked argument, rhetoric, and declamation in their tragedies, and they were not too nice about the genuineness of the sentiments or the fidelity of the picture: if the dramatist adhered to the newly discovered decencies of versification, and gave their intellects something to work

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<sup>1</sup> But see the remark in the first paragraph on p. 452.

upon in connection with the Unities and the French stage, so much the better. There might be poetry there too, but that was accidental, not essential.

It is not then surprising in these circumstances that the Restoration <sup>Tragedy :</sup> most characteristic product of the Restoration drama should have been the famous rhymed 'heroic' plays.

This extraordinary species, combining in itself features of the epic poem and the drama, was utterly unlike anything that had been previously seen on our stage. For some twenty years it enjoyed enormous popularity, thanks mainly to the ability of Dryden, its greatest exponent, and to the patronage of the Court. But in form and spirit it was too purely artificial to last, and, when Dryden after 1675 deserted the heroic play, it speedily fell into disfavour.

In origin the heroic play was a development of the principle of the heroic in literature, which may be traced from Italy, through France, to England. In each country this 'heroic' literature appeared in the successive forms of the heroic romance or novel,<sup>1</sup> the heroic poem,<sup>2</sup> and, finally, the heroic play. But the last named appears to have been, so far as English literature is concerned, an independent development, the first heroic plays in both English and French having appeared about the same time in 1656.<sup>3</sup>

The typical heroic play had three essential characteristics : it was written in rhyme, it was a tragedy, and its subject was invariably 'love and honour.' For types of this heroic love writers went naturally to the heroic romances, especially to the interminable stories of *La Calprenède* and *Mademoiselle de Scudéry*, and as these were full of extravagant adventures, it was but natural

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Lord Orrery's 'Parthenissa' (1654) in England; in French *La Calprenède's 'Cassandra'*, in ten volumes (1644-50), and *Mademoiselle de Scudéry's 'Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus'*, also in ten volumes (1649-53).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Davenant's 'Gondibert' (1651), Chapelain's 'La Pucelle' (1656).

<sup>3</sup> Davenant's 'Siege of Rhodes' (First Part; Second Part 1662), usually considered our first heroic play, was, by Cromwell's permission, produced as an opera in 1656. The same year saw the production in France of Thomas Corneille's 'Timocrate' and Quinault's 'La Mort de Cyrus,' the first specimens of the type in that country.

that the plays founded on them should resemble them in this. The heroic play was, as a rule, a medley of impossible feats of valour, extraordinary love-makings, constant and inexplicable changes of affection, all expressed in declamatory rhetoric often degenerating into mere rant and bombast, but occasionally rising—in Dryden at least—to poetry of striking beauty.

As already mentioned, Dryden was by far the greatest of the writers of heroic plays; among others, however, who wrote tragedies of this kind were Boyle, Earl of Orrery (who produced six), Settle, Lee, Otway, and Howard.

When, after the production of '*Aureng-Zebe*' in 1675, other Tragedy. Dryden grew 'weary of his long-loved mistresses, rhyme,' there was for a time a return in tragedy to the Elizabethan model, and the best Restoration tragedies, both those of Dryden himself and his greatest rival Otway, belong to this type. But thereafter the decline of tragedy was rapid, and was hastened when the influence of Racine began to make itself felt towards the close of the century. With Addison's '*Cato*' (1713), that supreme instance of the depths of feebleness and inanity that could be reached in a play perfectly constructed on the classic model, poetic tragedy as a distinct literary species in English may be said to have disappeared.

Restoration comedy was more fortunate than Restoration tragedy: there, at least, something of Comedy. permanent value was achieved in the famous prose comedy of manners evolved by Etherege, Wycherley, and others, under the influence of Molière, from the Jonsonian comedy of 'humours,' which reached its highest point of perfection towards the end of this period in the work of Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar.

In comedy play-goers wanted wit, smartness, repartee, brilliancy, briskness, and these they naturally found most attractive in connection with the manners of their own day, and the intrigues with which they were familiar. We get something like it in Jonson's comedies, if we deduct the ferocious moralist that stands behind them—something like it in Fletcher's, subtracting the poetic element; but with

the poetry and the moralist this new comedy had nothing to do. Its hero is the licentious young gallant of excellent breeding and ready wit ; its heroine is often his feminine counterpart, in whom vivacity is made more acceptable than virtue ; its favourite theme is the outwitting of a more or less dull husband, guardian, or father by unscrupulous dexterity ; and its great achievement is the perfection of dialogue. With the romantic and idyllic Shakespearean comedy it has, of course, nothing in common but the name.

The prose of this period is, perhaps, in one respect, more interesting and important to the modern reader than either the verse or the drama ; for it is in this age that English prose, as we are accustomed to it nowadays, may be said to have arisen. Whether or not Cowley has the right to be considered one of the 'fathers' of the new poetry, he certainly has a strong claim to that position towards modern prose ; and Dryden is scarcely a less powerful exponent of the one than of the other. Roughly speaking, we may say, without running the risk of serious error, that those qualities which differentiate the verse of the Classic school from that of the Romantic, also distinguish the prose of the end of the seventeenth century and the succeeding age from that of pre-Restoration times, excepting always the best prose of the best Elizabethan dramatists. And while we have gone back in verse to the Romantic ways, in prose the reforms of syntax and sentence-moulding then introduced have held their own. The trailing and involved sentences of the older writers, the intricate constructions, the inherited confusions be-

<sup>The New</sup> Prose. tween the idioms allowable in an inflected language and leading to painful obscurities in an uninflected one, the ambitious anacoluthons resulting from attempts to compass more than English permits, rapidly disappear.<sup>1</sup> 'The one supreme commandment, *Be thou*

<sup>1</sup> When we find Chapman, the Elizabethan translator of Homer, expressing himself in his preface thus : "Though truth in her very nakedness sits in so deep a pit, that from Gades to Aurora and Ganges few eyes can sound her, I hope yet those few here will so discover and confirm, that, the date being out of her darkness in this morning of our poet, he shall now gird his temples with the sun," — we pronounce that such a prose is intolerable. When we find Milton writing : "And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he, who would not be

*clear,' was what the children of Phoebus heard in those days, according to a poet of our own time, and they obeyed it in prose as in verse. The 'regularity, uniformity, precision, balance,' which Matthew Arnold regards as 'the needful qualities of a fit prose,' are rarely lacking in the work of the average man of letters of that age. If we miss in Cowley and Dryden and Temple that magnificent sonorousness and those flashes of poetic passion which ever and anon burst through the prose of Hooker or Raleigh or Milton, we have to console ourselves by reflecting on the general high average of their writing, their more equable polish, their pervading grace, and their easy lucidity.*

The change, however, was not introduced all at once, though it spread very rapidly. Certain writers Clarendon, have strong traces of the old influence upon them, and one at least of the greatest of this age, Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, is practically uninfluenced by the new. Moreover, the author of what is uncontestedly—if we exclude Milton—the greatest imaginative work of the age, is virtually uninfluenced by the literary tendencies of the time. This is John Bunyan, whom there is no

Bunyan. profit in endeavouring to group with any of these writers. And the two authors whose influence on the thought of their age and later times is as powerful as that of any of their contemporaries stand apart from the literary stream for a different reason—it is the subject-matter alone of Locke's works that renders them remarkable, and, while the same consideration applies to Newton even more strongly, he is further excluded from our study here by the fact that the 'Principia' is written in Latin.

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*frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem,"—we pronounce that such a prose has its own grandeur, but that it is obsolete and inconvenient. But when we find Dryden telling us: "What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age, in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write,"—then we exclaim that here at last we have the true English prose, a prose such as we would all gladly use if we only knew how. Yet Dryden was Milton's contemporary.'—MATTHEW ARNOLD.*

## CHAPTER XXIII.

JOHN DRYDEN (1631-1700).

DRYDEN came of a good Northamptonshire family, and was educated at Westminster School, where (in the year 1649) he wrote the verses ‘Upon the Death of Lord Hastings.’ These are a good example of the worst style of the far-fetched ‘conceits’ and ‘metaphysical’ ingenuities then prevalent, though shortly to disappear. In mentioning this effusion it is only necessary to add that Dryden fortunately wrote nothing else quite in this vein; but it may be interesting to quote a few lines both as a specimen of the kind of thing written while the metaphysical influence, the tendency that had prevailed from Donne to Cowley, was still strong on him, and as an indication of an early mastery over the form of the couplet:—

‘ His body was an orb, his sublime soul  
Did move on virtue’s and on learning’s pole :  
Whose regular motions better to our view,  
Than Archimedes’ sphere the heavens did shew.  
•     Graces and virtues, languages and arts,  
Beauty and learning filled up all the parts.  
•     Heaven’s gifts, which do, like falling stars, appear  
Scattered in others, all, as in their sphere,  
Were fixed, and conglobate in his soul ; and thence  
Shone through his body with sweet influence,  
Letting their glories so on each limb fall,  
The whole frame rendered was celestial.’

He presently furnishes a better example than this of the extraordinary unpoetical comparisons and perversely clever analogies into which he who would out-Cowley Cowley could be forced, when he refers to Hastings’ death from small-pox:—

‘ Blisters with pride swelled, which through’s flesh did sprout  
Like rose-buds, stuck i’ the lily skin about.

Each little pimple had a tear in it,  
 To wail the fault its rising did commit :  
 Which, rebel like, with its own lord at strife,  
 Thus made an insurrection 'gainst his life.  
 Or were these gems sent to adorn his skin,  
 The cabinet of a richer soul within ?  
 No comet need foretell his change drew on,  
 Whose corpse might seem a constellation.'

We turn gladly from this terrible stuff to the first composition of his manhood, the ' Heroic Stanzas on the Death of Oliver Cromwell,' which appeared in 1659. The poet after leaving Cambridge (Trinity College) seems to have had the advantage of the friendship and help of his relative Sir John Dryden, who was a rigid Puritan, and to have been on intimate terms with other more or less influential men of the same party. He himself, at this time and among these surroundings, was probably genuinely possessed of Puritan principles, and there seems no touch of insincerity in the poem mentioned above. The versification is good, and the style is dignified, though still marred by strained similes and artificial expressions :—

' Such was our prince ; yet owned a soul above  
 The highest acts it could produce to show :  
 Thus poor mechanic arts in public move,  
 While the deep secrets beyond practice go.

Nor died he when his ebbing fame went less,  
 But when fresh laurels courted him to live :  
 He seemed but to prevent<sup>1</sup> some new success,  
 As if above what triumphs earth could give.'

The concluding stanza, as it is the simplest and most direct, is also perhaps the finest :—

' His ashes in a peaceful urn shall rest,  
 His name a great example stands, to show  
 How strangely high endeavours may be blest  
 Where piety and valour jointly go.'

However, the Restoration put an end to any benefit Dryden might have derived from his influential Puritan

<sup>1</sup> Anticipate.

friends, and left him to subsist on his small patrimony—he had inherited about £60 a year in 1654—and his pen. Accordingly (like Waller, Cowley, and many more of less note) he promptly began to use it to welcome back the representative of all that was hateful to him whom he had lately been lauding in verse. ‘Astrea Redux : A Poem [of over 300 lines in heroic couplets] on the Happy Restoration and Return of his Sacred Majesty Charles II.’ was followed by another 140 lines addressed to the same ‘Sacred Majesty : A Panegyric on his Coronation.’

Both these productions are interesting, as showing how well by this time he could handle the heroic couplet; but they possess little other merit. This extract will do to show the style and matter of these verses; it is from the ‘Panegyric’ :—

‘Had greater haste these sacred rites prepared,  
Some guilty months had in your triumphs shared ;  
But this untainted year is all your own ;  
Your glories may without our crimes be shown  
We had not yet exhausted all our store,  
When you refreshed our joys by adding more ;  
As heaven, of old, dispensed celestial dew,  
You gave us manna, and still give us new.’

If the poet expected any manna of a tangible sort from the King, he must have been disappointed at first; nor does a similar poem of eighty couplets, addressed to the famous Lord Chancellor Hyde, seem to have had any material effect on the poet’s circumstances.

One effect of the Restoration, however, which we have already noted, was the reopening of the theatres, and of this Dryden promptly took advantage. In 1663 the poet married Lady Elizabeth Howard (sister of the Sir Robert Howard who was afterwards Dryden’s coadjutor in the ‘Indian Queen’), and the union seems not to have been a very happy one; at any rate, his scurrilous enemies subsequently overwhelmed him with taunts and abuse on the subject. In the year of his marriage and the two following he wrote nothing except for the stage. From the spring of 1665 to the end of 1666, however, the theatres were closed by authority (owing to the Plague and the Fire), and it

was towards the end of the latter year that he wrote the 'Annus Mirabilis,' or the 'Year of Wonders.'

This is a long poem written in heroic quatrains on the Dutch War, the Fire of London, and the virtues of King Charles and his relatives. As Saintsbury points out,<sup>1</sup> in this poem Dryden is still strongly under the influence of Davenant, whose 'Gondibert' (see p. 428) 'as yet retained sufficient prestige to make its stanza act as a not unfavourable advertisement of poems written in it. With regard to the nobility and dignity of this stanza, it may safely be said that "Annus Mirabilis" itself, the best poem<sup>2</sup> ever written therein, killed it by exposing its faults.' The faults, of course, are the monotonous recurrence of the same cadence in each stanza, with less possibilities of variation than the heroic couplet. Dryden's versification is good, however, and there are passages of fine poetry—e.g. the nine verses of the king's prayer, of which we quote this one:—

"O God," said he, "thou Patron of my days,  
Guide of my youth in exile and distress!  
Who me unfriended brought'st, by wondrous ways,  
The kingdom of my fathers to possess."

Though the poem has many of the worst faults of the metaphysical school, and some of the stanzas with their bathos read like parodies, yet, looking back, it is not hard to find in it excellences which augured the coming of a great poet.

The theatres were now opening again, and to them Dryden devoted all his energies for the next fourteen or fifteen years; by this means he rapidly rose in the estimation of the Court and the public, and was able, from his plays, to earn a fair income, which was further increased by his salary as Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal. Davenant, who preceded him in the Laureateship, had died in 1668, and Howell, the Historiographer Royal, two years before; Dryden received both appointments (together worth £200 a year) in 1670. During this period

<sup>1</sup> 'Dryden': in the 'English Men of Letters' Series.

<sup>2</sup> Most people would make an exception in favour of Gray's 'Elegy.'

he had made many enemies, but the time was now coming for him to gibbet them, and to establish his own fame as a satirist.

Up to this time (his plays apart) he had written nothing to which any higher title than tolerably good verse can, with any regard to truth, be given ; but in the score of years now left to him he wrote those poems on which his great fame deservedly rests. In 1679 there had appeared an ‘Essay upon Satire,’ a witty poem, in smooth, sarcastic, decasyllabic verse, the author of which was Mulgrave. Dryden, however, was said to have had some share in the composition, which ridiculed (among others) Dorset and Rochester. The latter—of whom the satirist wrote

‘To every face he cringes while he speaks,  
And when the back is turned the head he breaks’—

to get his revenge on Dryden, caused him to be waylaid and beaten by a gang of bullies. It is believed that Dryden had little, if any, hand in the satire, and that Mulgrave had written the lines about Rochester, whose bitter personal foe he was. Be this as it may, Dryden’s chief work was henceforth to be satirical.

The occasion of Dryden’s first and greatest satire is historical. It was written in 1681, at a time when political passion and popular excitement were at their height in England owing to the struggle over the Exclusion Bill. This measure, promoted by Shaftesbury and the Whigs, aimed at the exclusion of James, Duke of York, from the succession to the throne on the ground that he was an avowed Roman Catholic. Charles II., by skilful manœuvring, had succeeded in putting Shaftesbury and the Whigs in the wrong, and having dissolved Parliament in March 1681, felt strong enough to prosecute those who had taken an active part in the agitation against James. In July Shaftesbury was sent to the Tower on a charge of treason.

This step led to an outburst of pamphlets, lampoons, and other attacks on the King and his ministers. With a view to answering these attacks and influencing the public mind against Shaftesbury before his trial, Dryden as poet

laureate was pressed into the service of the royal party. The result was the publication of 'Absalom and Achitophel' on the 17th of November, 1681—a few days before Shaftesbury was indicted. The success of this satire was remarkable. It ran through several editions in a few days, and its allusions became universally known. The allegory was easily understood, and there was little difficulty in piercing the thin disguise of the allegorical names given to the chief personages. *Absalom*, of course, was the ill-fated Monmouth; *Achitophel*, Shaftesbury; King Charles figures as *David*; Elkanah Settle is *Doeg*, and Shadwell *Og*;<sup>1</sup> Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, is described under the name of *Zimri* in lines which must have made him sincerely sorry for his share in the 'Rehearsal':<sup>2</sup>—

'A man so various that he seemed to be  
Not one, but all mankind's epitome ;  
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong :  
Was everything by starts, and nothing long :  
But in the course of one revolving moon,  
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon.'

This is the famous portrait of Shaftesbury:—

'Of these the false Achitophel was first,  
A name to all succeeding ages curst :  
For close designs and crooked counsels fit,  
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit ;  
Restless, unfixed in principles and place,  
In power pleased, impatient of disgrace ;  
A fiery soul, which, working out its way,  
Fretted the pigmy body to decay,  
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.  
A daring pilot in extremity,  
Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,  
He sought the storms ; but, for a calm unfit,  
Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.  
Great wits are sure to madness near allied,  
And thin partitions do their bounds divide ;  
Else why should he, with wealth and honour blest,  
Refuse his age the needful hours of rest ?  
Punish a body which he could not please,  
Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease ?'

<sup>1</sup> Settle and Shadwell are mentioned in the 2nd part only (see p. 439).

<sup>2</sup> See p. 465.

‘ And all to leave what with his toil he won  
 To that unfeathered two-legged thing, a son,  
 Got, while his soul did huddled notions try,  
 And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.  
 In friendship false, implacable in hate,  
 Resolved to ruin or to rule the state ;  
 To compass this the triple bond he broke,  
 The pillars of the public safety shook,  
 And fitted Israel for a foreign yoke :  
 Then, seized with fear, yet still affecting fame,  
 Usurped a patriot’s all-atoning name.’

In spite of the satire, Shaftesbury was acquitted, and became the popular hero of the day. A medal was struck off with his head and name on one side, the sun issuing from the clouds, with the motto *Laetamur*, on the other.

This was the occasion of Dryden’s ‘The Medal: a Satire  
 ‘*The Medal,*’ against Sedition,’ which appeared in 1682 and  
 ‘*MacFlecknoe,*’<sup>1682.</sup> is devoted to lashing Shaftesbury and his supporters.<sup>1</sup> The style and metre are those of ‘Absalom,’ save that there are more triple rhymes in proportion to its length, and Alexandrines occur pretty frequently. Here are a dozen lines for a specimen, of which the workmanship is so exactly like that of Pope, half a century later, that it would be impossible for a critic to decide from internal evidence which poet wrote them :—

‘ Athens, no doubt, did righteously decide,  
 When Phocion and when Socrates were tried ;  
 As righteously they did those dooms repent ;  
 Still they were wise, whatever way they went :  
 Crowds err not, though to both extremes they run ;  
 To kill the father and recall the son.  
 Some think the fools were most as times went then,  
 But now the world’s o'erstocked with prudent men.  
 The common cry is e’en religion’s test,  
 The Turk’s is at Constantinople best ;  
 Idols in India ; Popery at Rome ;  
 And our own worship only true at home.’

A reply to ‘The Medal’ was quickly published by Thomas Shadwell, the dramatist, under the title of ‘The

<sup>1</sup> ‘Absalom and Achitophel’ was immediately answered by a number of writers, among whom were Settle (Absalom Senior), Fordage, and ‘a person of honour,’ who is thought to have been the Duke of Buckingham; and ‘The Medal’ was likewise at once attacked by a similar crew.

Medal of John Bayes.' This answer took the form of a scurrilous and rancorous personal attack on Dryden, who in October 1682 took exemplary vengeance on Shadwell by 'MacFlecknoe,' a short but scathing satire in which a wretched poetaster named Flecknoe, who, says Dryden,

‘like Augustus, young  
Was called to empire and had governed long,  
In prose and verse was owned without dispute  
Through all the realms of Nonsense absolute.’

\* \* \* \* \*

And pondering which of all his sons was fit  
To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,  
Cried, ‘Tis resolved, for nature pleads that he  
Should only rule who most resembles me.  
Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,  
Mature in dulness from his tender years ;  
Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he  
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.  
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,  
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.’<sup>1</sup>

But this vengeance, terrible as it was, did not content Dryden. When in November of the same year a Second Part to 'Absalom and Achitophel' was written by Nahum Tate, Dryden inserted some 200 lines in which Shadwell again appears as

‘Og from a treason-tavern rolling home.  
Round as a globe and liquored every chink,  
Goodly and great he sails behind his link.  
With all this bulk there’s nothing lost in Og,  
For every inch that is not fool is rogue.’

‘He never,’ says the satirist,

‘ was a poet of God’s making ;  
The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull  
With this prophetic blessing — *Be thou dull* ;  
Drink, swear, and roar, forbear no lewd delight  
Fit for thy bulk, do anything but write.  
Thou art of lasting make, like thoughtless men,  
A strong nativity—but for the pen ;  
Eat opium, mingle arsenic with thy drink,  
Still thou mayest live, avoiding pen and ink.’

<sup>1</sup> The 'MacFlecknoe' is a fragment or episode of a mock epic poem ; Pope's 'Dunciad' is its legitimate offspring—bigger, but perhaps not greater, than its parent. For its title see p. 457.

In this same year 1682 appeared the 'Religio Laici,' a poem in which Dryden states his faith, and his reasons for his faith as a member of the Church of England. It is a moot point whether the definition of poetry can be extended to include didactic verse, and indeed much of the poem mentioned above has no quality save its metre and rhyme to distinguish it from the equally caustic, well-reasoned, well-balanced prose of the period. Yet didactic verse, as Lucretius proved in his famous work, may contain great poetry, and so in the 'Religio,' as well as in the 'Hind,' there are passages to which no unprejudiced critic could deny this title—e.g. the opening lines in the 'Religio':—

‘Dim as the borrowed beams of moon and stars,  
To lonely, weary, wandering travellers,  
Is reason to the soul ; and as on high  
Those rolling fires discover but the sky,  
Not light us here, so Reason’s glimmering ray  
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,  
But guide us upward to a better day.  
And as those nightly tapers disappear,  
When day’s bright lord ascends our hemisphere ;  
So pale grows Reason at Religion’s sight ;  
So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.’

It will be noticed that Dryden uses the ‘overflow,’ the triplets, and the other methods of breaking the regularity of the couplet more frequently in some parts of this poem than is his wont. There is an interesting passage in his introduction to it—a capital specimen of his strong, lucid prose—which gives Dryden’s views on ‘didactic’ poetry, and is, for other reasons, worth quoting here:—

‘It remains that I acquaint the reader, that these verses were written for an ingenuous young gentleman, my friend, upon his translation of “The Critical History of the Old Testament,” composed by the learned father Simon : the verses, therefore, are addressed to the translator of that work, and the style of them is what it ought to be, epistolary.

If anyone be so lamentable a critic as to require the smoothness, the numbers, and the turn of heroic poetry in this poem, I must tell him that, if he has not read Horace, I have studied him, and hope the style of his epistles is not ill imitated here. The expressions of a poem designed purely for instruction ought to be plain

and natural, and yet majestic ; for here the poet is presumed to be a kind of lawgiver, and those three qualities which I have named are proper to the legislative style. The florid, elevated, and figurative way is for the passions ; for love and hatred, fear and anger, are begotten in the soul, by showing their objects out of their true proportion, either greater than the life or less ; but instruction is to be given by showing them what they naturally are. A man is to be cheated into passion, but to be reasoned into truth.'

'The Hind and the Panther,' to which we have alluded above, belongs to a somewhat later date (1686-7) than the 'Religio,' but it is so closely connected with it in form and matter, that it may be conveniently noticed here; it is a defence, under the form of a fable, or allegory, of the Roman Catholic Church,

'A milk-white hind, immortal and unchanged,  
At the Church of England,

'The panther, sure the noblest next the hind,  
And fairest creature of the spotted kind,'

'the bloody Bear, an *independent* beast,' the 'quaking Hare' (Quakers), 'the buffoon Ape' (Atheists and Deists), 'false Reynard' (Arians and Socinians), and so forth. What caused Dryden to change his religion has from his days to ours been matter of dispute: it will suffice for us to say that though it took place at a convenient day (the accession of a Roman Catholic king), and though he seems to have had a pension more or less in consequence, yet that pension may have been only a genuine revival of the Laureate's salary, which at first James II. had discontinued, and also that Dryden's wife (and probably his eldest son) had been already converted to the Roman faith. It should be noted, too, that when Dryden might have profited by turning Protestant again, in 1688 (when, on the accession of King William, he could no longer as a Catholic hold office), he adhered to his adopted creed, and later on in life (1700) gave another proof of his independence of spirit by refusing to allow his 'Virgil' to be dedicated to King William, in spite of the publisher Tonson's earnest entreaties.

A poem that appeared between the publication of the  
 Other 'Religio' and 'The Hind' scarcely claims a  
 Poems. passing notice, viz. the 'Threnodia Augustalis,'  
 an ode on the death of Charles II. With some few fine  
 lines it is on the whole a bombastic, adulatory, and in-  
 harmonious composition. Stanza xiii., however, is interest-  
 ing for the remarks Dryden makes on the effect of  
 Charles's accession with regard to poetry :—

'So, rising from his father's urn,  
 So glorious did our Charles return ;  
 The officious muses came along—  
 A gay harmonious quire, like angels ever young ;  
 (The muse that mourns him now his happy triumph sung.)  
 E'en they could thrive in this auspicious reign ;  
 And such a plenteous crop they bore  
 Of purest and well-winnowed grain,  
 As Britain never knew before.  
 Though little was their hire and light their gain,  
 Yet somewhat to their share he threw ;  
 Fed from his hand, they sung and flew  
 Like birds of paradise that lived on morning dew.'

If this ode be taken as a sample of Dryden's uninspired Muse, two others will show what great poetic powers he could exhibit in the same verse-form. These are the two odes on 'St. Cecilia's Day,' the first a short poem of about sixty lines, written in 1687 ; the more famous one, longer and more elaborate, ten years later. 'Alexander's Feast,' as the second ode is named, may perhaps be justly called the most 'poetic' of all Dryden's writings in its depicting of the various passions and the arousing of sympathetic emotions in the reader. It is probably the most widely known of all Dryden's compositions, and many of the lines have become stock quotations. We give here a portion of one of the choruses :—

'Soitly sweet in Lydian measures,  
 Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures.  
 War, he sung, is toil and trouble ;  
 Honour but an empty bubble ;  
 Never ending, still beginning,  
 Fighting still, and still destroying ;  
 If the world be worth thy winning,  
 Think, O think it worth enjoying :

Lovely Thais sits beside thee ;  
Take the good the gods provide thee !'

The rest of Dryden's poetical works will not occupy us long. At various times (1684-85, 1692-94) volumes of his 'Miscellanies' and 'Translations' appeared. These contain besides the odes many beautiful occasional pieces and lyrics, together with a number of translations of portions of the classics (Theocritus, Lucretius, Horace, Juvenal, Persius, and Vergil).

Special reference may here be made to Dryden's finest effort in the domain of elegy, the short poem written in 1686 'To the Memory of the accomplished young Lady, Mrs. [i.e. Miss] Anne Killigrew,' whom the poet addresses as

'Thou youngest virgin-daughter of the skies  
Made in the last promotion of the blest ;  
Whose palms, new-plucked from Paradise,  
In spreading branches more sublimely rise,  
Rich with immortal green above the rest.'

Miss Killigrew had been herself a poet in a small way, and the thought of her stainless muse fills Dryden with self-reproach for his own misdemeanours. He writes :—

'O gracious God ! how far have we  
Profaned thy heavenly gift of Poesy !  
Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,  
Debased to each obscene and impious use,  
Whose harmony was first ordained above  
For tongues of angels and for hymns of love.'

The success of his translation of Vergil's 'Third Georgic,' in 1693-4, led Dryden to take in hand an English metrical version of all Vergil's works, which he completed in 1697. This translation met with immediate success, and has maintained its position as one of the best English translations of a classic poet (if not the best). Johnson (who is responsible for the opinion that no reader ever wished 'Paradise Lost' *longer*) has praised Dryden for making his Vergil *interesting* to the highest degree; we may here, perhaps, be allowed to add that we reckon this power of holding the reader's attention as one of Dryden's chief merits; his longer poems are all on topical, political, or

personal subjects, and it was not his province in them (perhaps not in his power) to create character or stir our deeper feelings ; yet if one dips at random into ‘ Absalom and Achitophel,’ ‘ MacFlecknoe,’ ‘ Religio Laici,’ or even the long and occasionally puerile ‘ The Hind and the Panther,’ it is difficult to read long without getting enthralled, or to close the book without reading to the end.

The ‘ Virgil ’ was published three years before Dryden’s death ; on finishing it he took up the project of translating Homer, which, however, he did not live to complete. In the year of his death his ‘ Fables ’ (or versions of Chaucer and Boccaccio) appeared, and met with universal approbation. He died at the height of his literary fame, the undisputed king of English men of letters of the day.

Dryden’s prose, of which a specimen has already been given, and to the general characteristics of Prose and Criticism. which we have already referred, remains to be treated in a little more detail. Most of it appeared by way of preface to the published editions of his plays, and frequently, too, he added to his poems (*e.g.* his ‘ Epistle to the Whigs ’ in ‘ The Medal ’) an introductory letter or dedication. His criticisms and explanations are as valuable for the insight they give us into his mind, and for the means they afford us of judging of his prose style, as for their own intrinsic merit, though that is sometimes very striking.

Dryden has the distinction of being the introducer of the comparative and magisterial style of criticism which flourished till about the middle of the nineteenth century, but is now in disrepute, the more modest inductive method having taken its place. He has the greater distinction of being our first critic to make a serious attempt at applying the historical method to criticism, that is of attempting to trace the history of the art-form upon which he is sitting in judgment. There had been other English writers on English literature before Dryden, it is true (*e.g.* Sidney and Puttenham), but he is the first we meet who deserves the name of critic. Possessing a large mind free from petty prejudices, he stands head and shoulders above any critics who succeeded him during the

next century, and one is safer with him than even ~~with~~ so great a man as Dr. Johnson, whose prejudices too often warp his judgment.

The most interesting piece of prose which Dryden wrote <sup>'Essay on Dramatic Poesie,' first issued in 1667.</sup> is the 'Essay on Dramatic Poesie,' first issued in 1667, 'the writing of which,' he says in his preface, 'served as an amusement to me in the country when the violence of the last plague had driven me from the town.' It is in the form of a dialogue between Neander (Dryden), Crites (Howard), Eugenius (Dorset), and Lisideius (Sedley).

'It was that memorable day in the first summer of the late war when our Navy engaged the Dutch . . . the noise of the cannon from both navies reached our ears about the city.' The four friends take a barge and are rowed out on the Thames to hear the cannonading. The dying away of the sound convinces them that the hostile fleet is being driven off, and they fall to discussing poetry and the drama.

Then follow three literary controversies. The first is on the eternal question of Ancients against Moderns. Crites espouses the side of the former, Eugenius that of the latter.

The next dispute is as to the relative merits of the French and the English stage. Lisideius claims that, though forty years ago the English were superior, it is the French now who observe the rules of the stage better. They do not burden their plays with underplots: they avoid the absurd English tragi-comedy, and do not mix farce with tragedy. They avoid stage-deaths and horrors. No French play ends with a "conversion" or simple change of will. Neander's answer to an interesting contention is the most valuable and striking part of the 'Essay,' because here we have a great creative artist discussing the technique of his own profession. Dryden admits that French plays have more decorum, just as a statue has more than a man. He states that the French are beginning to imitate the English tragi-comedy, but their humours are very thin-sown. Their long declamations are incompatible with true passion, and there is far too little action in their plays. Many of the English plays

are just as regular, and our irregular plays are more masculine. Next follow the famous criticisms upon Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Jonson, which every student must know. Dryden then gives a detailed examen of Jonson's 'Silent Woman,' 'the intrigue of which is,' he says, 'the greatest and most noble of any pure unmixed comedy in any language.'

The concluding dispute is not particularly interesting, and concerns the relative merits of rhyme and blank verse. Crites thinks blank verse too low for a poem (this is not feigned, as Howard had made this contention in a prologue to his Collected Works, 1665), but the proper metre for a tragedy. Neander defends the use of rhyme in a tragedy, a theory which Dryden in his own person abandoned when he wrote 'All for Love' (1678).

Of his style it will suffice to say that he abandoned the long-winded, cumbrous sentences of the earlier prose-writers, and used a simple, straightforward, vigorous mode of expressing his meaning. He is not the wielder of a great prose style such as is Taylor at his best, or Burke or Gibbon; nor a writer of extreme taste and elegance like Temple or Addison or many essayists and critics of a later day. His greatest merit is that he can use prose as a fit means of expressing his thoughts so as to make them at once clear to others. Dryden's style influenced all successive prose-writers. Charles James Fox said that Dryden's prose was Burke's great favourite, and that Burke imitated him more than anyone else. Malone the critic is of the same opinion. Lord Morley adds, 'We may well believe that he was attracted by Dryden's ease, his copiousness, his gaiety, his manliness of style, but there can hardly have been any conscious attempt at imitation. Their topics were too different.'

The following extract from the 'Essay' shows Dryden to advantage, and is interesting from its subject-matter:—

'As for Jonson, to whose character I am now arrived, if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself, as

well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and language, and humour also, in some measure, we had before him; but something of art was wanting to the drama till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions: his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully; especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such a height.

Humour was his proper sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people.

He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latin; and he borrowed boldly from them. There is scarce a poet or historian, among the Roman authors of those times, whom he has not translated in "Sejanus" and "Catiline." But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch; and what would be theft in other poets, is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers, he so represents old Rome to us, in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that if one of their own poets had written either of his tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his language, 'twas that he weaved it too closely and laboriously in his serious plays. Perhaps, too, he did a little too much *Romanize* our tongue, leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latin as he found them: wherein, though he learnedly followed the idiom of their language, he did not enough comply with ours.

If I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare.'

We have already said that Dryden was one of the first to take advantage of the reopening of the theatres. 'Of the stage, when he had once invaded it,' says Johnson, 'he kept possession for many years; not, indeed, without the competition of rivals, who sometimes prevailed, or the censure of critics, which was often poignant and often just; but with such a degree of reputation as made him at least secure of being heard, whatever might be the final determination of the public.' His first drama was 'The Duke of Guise,' which, however, he laid aside unfinished in 1662, but completed, in collaboration with Lee, twenty years later, when it was turned into a play with a political purpose, directed against the supporters of Monmouth. The first of Dryden's plays to

be represented on the stage was a prose comedy, 'The Wild Gallant,' which met with no success; but his next venture, 'The Rival Ladies' (1663-4), a comedy in which two important scenes were written in rhyme, the rest being in blank verse, was better received.

In the dedication to Lord Orrery, prefixed to the published play in 1664, as he did later in the 'Dramatic Poesie,' Dryden upheld the position that rhyme was more fitting than blank verse for tragedy, and accordingly his plays 'The Indian Queen' (1663-4) and 'The Indian Emperor' (1665) are both rhymed. 'The Indian Queen' was written in conjunction with Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law, and has the distinction, if we except Davenant's 'Siege of Rhodes,' of being our first 'heroic play.' Howard, in a preface to his own plays, in 1665, took up the cudgels against Dryden, maintaining that blank verse, though too mean and low for a poem,<sup>1</sup> was the fit metre for a play. This called forth a reply from Dryden, in the 'Essay of Dramatic Poesie' already referred to, which was again answered by Howard in the preface to his 'Duke of Lerma.' This produced the somewhat acrimonious 'Defence of the Essay' prefixed to the second edition of 'The Indian Emperor,' in 1668.

To the year before this two comedies belong, 'Secret Love; or, The Maiden Queen,' 'which Mr. Dryden himself in his preface seems to brag of,' says Pepys, 'and is indeed a good play,' and 'Sir Martin Marall,' an adaptation of Molière's 'L'Etourdi.' 'The Tempest,' which also appeared in 1667, was a version, or rather per-version, of Shakespeare's play, and Davenant had some part in it. 'An Evening's Love; or, The Mock Astrologer,' imitated from the 'Feint Astrologue' of Thomas Corneille, was another comedy: it was acted at the King's Theatre (which Dryden had contracted to supply with three plays a year<sup>2</sup>), and met with little success.

Dryden's next two plays were tragedies in rhyme, 'Tyrannic Love; or, The Royal Martyr' (1669) and 'The

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that Milton's later works were not yet published (see p. 379).

<sup>2</sup> This contract, it need hardly be said, was never kept.

Conquest of Granada' (in two parts, 1669-1670), which latter was one of his most successful plays.

'The two parts of "The Conquest of Granada,"' says Johnson, 'are written with a seeming determination to glut the public with dramatic wonders, to exhibit in its highest elevation a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantic heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without inquiring the cause, and loves in spite of the obligations of justice and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity, and majestic madness, such as, if it is often despised, is often reverenced, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.'<sup>1</sup>

It was in 1670, after the production of 'The Conquest of Granada,' with which Charles II. was immensely pleased (Nell Gwynne acted in it), that the Laureateship (as we have mentioned) was conferred on Dryden, who was now in the summit of his glory. An attempt to undermine his great success was made in the following year by the production of that famous burlesque 'The Rehearsal,' in which Dryden figures as Mr. Bayes. Perhaps in consequence of this witty attack Dryden turned for a time to comedies and produced 'Marriage à la Mode' (1672) and 'Love in a Nunnery,' in the same year. To the war against the Dutch (1673) is due 'Amboyna,' a poor play in prose and rhyme intended to augment the hatred of its hearers against our foes. It was followed in 1674 (the year of Milton's death) by a rhymed version in dramatic form of 'Paradise Lost,' entitled 'The State of Innocence.' Dryden calls this production an opera, though perhaps 'burlesque' would be a fitter title for it; however, it was

<sup>1</sup> Elkanah Settle (1648-1724), whom Dryden savagely ridiculed in 1678 for his 'Empress of Morocco,' calling its author, *inter alia*, 'an animal of most deplored understanding,' replied with some equally civil observations on 'The Conquest of Granada.'

apparently not intended for acting, and Dryden seems to have been, to some small degree at least, conscious of the greatness of Milton's poem, which he admits to be 'one of the greatest, most noble, and sublime which either this age or nation has produced.'<sup>1</sup>

A far worthier work—perhaps the best of all Dryden's plays—was 'Aureng-Zebe,' which appeared next year. This is the last of his rhyming tragedies, and in the prologue he shows that he was not of the opinion that he had so stoutly maintained a dozen years before against Sir R. Howard. The poet,

‘out of no feigned modesty, this day  
Damns his laborious trifle of a play ;  
Not that it’s worse than what before he writ,  
But he has now another taste of wit ;  
And, to confess a truth, though out of time,  
*Grows weary of his long-loved mistress Rhyme.*’

In this prologue he declares

‘That, spite of all his pride, a secret shame  
Invades his breast at Shakespeare’s sacred name’;

and his next venture was a blank-verse tragedy founded on 'Antony and Cleopatra,' entitled 'All for Love; or, The World Well Lost.' This, Dryden's favourite play, is great drama, and would have been more famous if Shakespeare had not written 'Antony and Cleopatra.'

In the same year (1678) he produced 'Limberham; or, The Kind Keeper,' a play which was prohibited,<sup>2</sup> and 'Œdipus,' in which Lee collaborated. In 1679 and 1680 no play of Dryden's appeared, but in 1681 he came forward with 'The Spanish Friar,' a 'Protestant play,' which was highly successful, partly, no doubt, on its own merits, which are considerable, but in great measure, too, from the way in which, 'at a time when the nation was rabid about Oates's supposed plot,' the Roman Catholic religion was held up to scorn.

<sup>1</sup> But Dryden said about as much at various times for Denham, Waller, Davenant, and Mulgrave.

<sup>2</sup> 'For its indelicacy'; but on this ground a very large part both of Dryden's work and of most of his contemporaries' might with equal justice have been suppressed.

In the year of the accession of James II. appeared a political ‘opera,’ ‘Albion and Albanius,’ one of the poorest of his works. The music is said to have been as bad as the poetry, which caused some wag to remark that the poet and the composer seemed to have ‘mistaken their trade; the former writing the music, the latter the verse.’ This is the only play of Dryden’s that belongs to the reign of James, but after the Revolution (when Dryden lost his Laureateship, and—insult added to injury—was succeeded by Shadwell) he turned to the stage again, and produced (in 1690) ‘Don Sebastian,’ which is ranked by some above ‘Aureng-Zebe.’

‘Amphitryon’ (1690), ‘King Arthur’ (1691), ‘Cleomenes’ (1692), and ‘Love Triumphant’ (1694) are his last plays. The first of these is a comedy adapted from Molière’s adaptation of the ‘Amphitryo’ of Plautus; the next is an ‘opera’ (in which and in ‘Don Sebastian’ some trace the influence of Milton); the third is a tragedy written in conjunction with Southerne; and the last of Dryden’s dramatic works was a tragi-comedy, which was an utter failure, so that, as Johnson says, ‘he began and ended his dramatic labours with an ill success.’

In Dryden’s plays we may find specimens of all the stage productions of the age—the licentious comedy in prose, the ‘opera,’ the grandiose (and often ranting) tragedy in rhyme and in blank verse. He has left behind him some thirty dramatic pieces, of which the bulk have no great literary merit, while some are utterly unworthy; but two, or at most three, are fine tragedies, which rank as high as any works of their time, and are perhaps as good as any that have yet been written since the Elizabethan age. Even the feeblest of his plays have noble passages scattered here and there and contain much fine lyric.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### DRYDEN'S CONTEMPORARIES—THE POETS (c. 1660–1700).

EXCLUDING from this chapter all treatment of the writings of Milton, Herrick, Cowley, Waller, and some others whose work is more properly treated in connection with the period immediately before 1660,<sup>1</sup> and omitting writers such as Prior, Garth, Addison, and others, whose work it is more appropriate to defer till we reach the section that deals with the age in which most of it was done, we find no great names, and not many considerable ones, among the verse writers contemporary with Dryden.

Satire and essay-writing in verse are the most frequent productions of the poets of this age. First among them in point of time and chief among them in importance is Butler, the author of ‘*Hudibras*.’ Of his life little is known, though it seems to be agreed that the success of his work brought him little profit in spite of its immense popularity, and that he died in straitened circumstances. ‘He asked for bread, and he received a stone,’ said Wesley at the time when a monument was being erected to the poet’s memory. The first instalment of ‘*Hudibras*’ appeared in 1663; it was continued in 1664 and 1678, and was left unfinished. It is a long and very witty mock epic levelled against the Puritans. The name ‘*Hudibras*’ is borrowed from the ‘Faery Queen,’ Cervantes’ ‘Don Quixote’ suggested the frame-work, and possibly the ‘*Virgile Travesti*’ of Butler’s French contemporary Scarron the style and

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XIX., and Vol. I., Chapter XVIII.

treatment, while the French humourist Rabelais had also some general influence upon the work.

Its hero, Hudibras (Sir Samuel Luke, a Presbyterian justice of the peace, in whose household Butler seems to have passed some unhappy years), sets out, like another Don Quixote, with his Sancho Panza (Squire Ralph), to tilt against the wickedness of the times. The whole force of the satirist's power is devoted to holding up to ridicule the anti-Royalist party. The chief of its former leaders (Cromwell, Fleetwood, Prynne, *et al.*) appear by name, and scores of others are alluded to under various titles. The metre of 'Hudibras' is octosyllabic, and many of his verses (mostly misquoted) have become common property —*e.g.*:

‘He that runs may fight again,  
Which he can never do that's slain’;

or—

‘He that complies against his will,  
Is of his own opinion still.’

But, except for certain telling couplets, 'Hudibras' is now virtually unknown. This had become the case even in Johnson's time, who himself supplies one of the reasons for this. 'Human works are not easily found without a perishable part,' and what made the chief excellence of 'Hudibras' in its day was precisely that 'perishable part.' 'The manners,' as Johnson says, 'are temporary and local, and therefore become every day less intelligible, and less striking.' 'Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the style and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments and the fundamental subject. It, therefore, like all bodies composed of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All disproportion is unnatural; and from what is unnatural we can derive only the pleasure which novelty produces. We admire it awhile as a strange thing; but when it is no longer strange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of artifice, which by frequent repetition detects itself; and the reader, learning in time what he is to expect, lays down the book, as the spectator turns away from a second

exhibition of those tricks of which the only use is to show that they can be played.'

A few lines from the lengthy description of the hero, when first he set out 'a-colonelling,' will give the reader some idea of Butler's style:—

'For his religion it was fit  
 To match his learning and his wit :  
 'Twas presbyterian true-blue ;  
 For he was of that stubborn crew  
 Of errant saints, whom all men grant  
 To be the true church militant ;  
 Such as do build their faith upon  
 The holy text of pike and gun ;  
 Decide all controversies by  
 Intallible artillery ;  
 And prove their doctrine orthodox  
 By apostolic blows and knocks ;  
 Call fire, and sword, and desolation,  
 A godly, thorough reformation,  
 Which always must be carried on,  
 And still be doing, never done ;  
 As if religion were intended  
 For nothing else but to be mended :  
 A sect whose chief devotion lies  
 In odd perverse antipathies ;  
 In falling out with that or this,  
 And finding somewhat still amiss ;  
 More peevish, cross, and splenetic  
 Than dog distract or monkey sick ;  
 That with more care keep holy-day  
 The wrong, than others the right way ;  
 Compound for sins they are inclined to,  
 By damning those they have no mind to.'

Witty, incisive, and full of force as every line is, perhaps the reader will see even from these extracts the justice of a great part of Johnson's criticism, and he will realise with no great difficulty that a poem consisting of many thousand lines, mainly describing moods and conversation and dealing little with adventure, becomes wearisome at length, even though the staple of it is as ingeniously satirical as the passage quoted.

As an example of his powers as a parodist we take the following from his 'Cat and Puss,' an amusing travesty of

the heroic play and heroic couplet so much loved by his contemporaries :—

- Cat.* Forbear, foul ravisher, this rude address ;  
Canst thou, at once, both injure and caress ?
- Puss.* Thou hast bewitched me with thy powerful charms,  
And I, by drawing blood, would cure my harms.
- C.* He that does love would set his heart a-tilt,  
Ere one drop of his lady's should be spilt.
- P.* Your wounds are but without, and mine within :  
You wound my heart, and I but prick your skin ;  
And while your eyes pierce deeper than my claws,  
You blame the effect of which you are the cause.
- C.* How could my guiltless eyes your heart invade,  
Had it not first been by your own betrayed ?  
Hence 'tis my greatest crime has only been  
(Not in mine eyes but yours) in being seen.
- P.* I hurt to love, but do not love to hurt.
- C.* That's worse than making cruelty a sport.'

And so on. This is as good as the heroic caterwaulings of Dryden at his worst or of Elkanah Settle at his best, and forms an excellent piece of criticism, as all good parody should, upon what it parodies.

Butler's other poems are not of great account. His 'Elephant in the Moon' is a delicious satire on the wise men of the Royal Society. According to the satirist, one of their number, looking through a telescope, perceives an elephant in the moon, which turns out to be a mouse that has managed to creep into the instrument. It is curious that it was first written in Butler's Hudibrastic metre, and then re-written in 'long verse' (*i.e.* deca-syllabic). The satire on our 'Ridiculous Imitation of the French' is chiefly interesting for its account of the fashion it rails at—the rage for copying in all things from our neighbours across the Channel, which prevailed after the Restoration. His prose 'Characters' are perhaps worthier of attention than anything else he wrote, except 'Hudibras': they are carefully written essays which remind us of Overbury and Earle only in their titles and certain formal characteristics. They are longer and rather more elaborate than anything of the kind that had been done before, and they show Butler's command of a sturdy prose which is of

the new order in its main essentials yet has leanings to the old. Here is the beginning of the description of a 'Character' that attracted him greatly:—

'A LEADER OF A FACTION sets the psalm, and all his party sing after him. He is like a figure in arithmetic, the more ciphers he stands before, the more his value amounts to. He is a great haranguer, talks himself into authority, and, like a parrot, climbs with his beak. He appears brave in the head of his party, but braver in his own; for vainglory leade him as he does them,—and both many times out of the king's highway, over hedges and ditches, to find out byways and shorter cuts, which generally prove the furthest about, but never the nearest home again. He is so passionate a lover of the liberty of the people, that his fondness turns to jealousy; he interprets every trifle in the worst sense to the prejudice of her honesty, and is so full of caprices and scruples that, if he had his will, he would have her shut up and never suffered to go abroad again, if not made away, for her incontinence.'

Andrew Marvell is the one Puritan of the age besides Milton who achieved distinction in poetry.

Andrew  
Marvell,  
1621-1678. Every lover of poetry should know his 'Garden,' the best example of Nature poetry in the seventeenth century. It is included in most anthologies, and contains the famous lines upon a sympathetic mind in a garden:—

'The mind, that ocean where each kind  
Does straight its own resemblance find ;  
Yet it creates, transcending these,  
Far other worlds, and other seas,  
Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.'

Palgrave said of 'The Garden' that it is a test of a reader's insight into the most poetical aspects of poetry. Marvell, by giving in his poetry rich food for thought, claims kinship with Milton; in the love he shows for Nature he looks forward to Cowper.

His 'Emigrants in the Bermudas' and 'Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn' are poems no less beautiful than 'The Garden,' while his 'Horatian Ode' is a splendid piece of panegyric.

'He has depth of feeling,' says a critic, 'descriptive power, melody; his study of the classics could not fail to

teach him form ; sometimes we find in him an airy and tender grace which reminds us of the lighter manner of Milton.'

This last of the Puritan poets, who had been Milton's colleague in the Latin secretaryship, remained in political life after the Restoration, as member for Hull. 'A Roman patriot incorruptible and inflexible in the corrupt and servile Parliaments of Charles II.,' he has been called by Goldwin Smith ; 'the poems of his later days were Marvell's satires. not epics or lyrics, but satires levelled, like his renowned pamphlets, against tyranny and wickedness in Church and State.' His metrical productions which fall within the scope of this chapter are, among other satirical pieces, 'Flecknoe,' 'Last Instructions to a Painter,' 'The Character of Holland' ; these are in the heroic distich, and may be said to be the forerunners of the satires of Oldham, Dryden, and Defoe. They have no great intrinsic merit, and the versification is clumsy and rough ; but they were effective enough and sufficiently vigorous.

Marvell died in the midst of a fierce and bitter Non-Popery controversy with Parker, Bishop of Oxford, and there was some suspicion that he had been poisoned. It was in this feud that he wrote one of the most famous of his prose works, 'The Rehearsal Transposed.'<sup>1</sup> A brief extract from Marvell's satire upon Holland will give us a fair specimen of his work in this vein :—

' Holland that scarce deserves the name of land,  
As but the off-scouring of the British sand,  
And so much earth as was contributed  
By English pilots when they heaved the lead ;  
Or what by the ocean's slow alluvion tell,  
Of ship-wrecked cockle and the mussel-shell ;  
This indigested vomit of the sea  
Fell to the Dutch by just propriety.  
Glad then as miners who have found the ore,  
They with mad labour fished the land to shore ;

\* \* \* \* \*

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<sup>1</sup> The title was, of course, borrowed from Buckingham's play (p. 465) ; Parker is made to figure as Mr. Bayes.

‘ A daily deluge over them does boil,  
 The earth and water play at level coil.  
 The fish oft times the burgher dispossess  
 And sat not as a meat, but as a guest.’

Oldham’s claim to remembrance rests not on his ‘ Praise of Homer,’ or on his ‘ Pindaric Odes,’ but on John Oldham, the ‘ Satires against the Jesuits.’ Dryden, who 1653–1683. edited his ‘ Remains’ in 1684, and lavished praises upon him, doubtless learned much from the vigorous satirist. Like Marvell, he wrote in the heroic distich (which, indeed, had become, and has remained, the general vehicle for metrical satire); but though he far surpasses any previous satirical writer of our tongue, his versification is slipshod and careless. His life was short and sad. On leaving the University he took to teaching; gave it up after a few years for literature; published without a patron; and died, after a storm-tossed, unsatisfied life, in poverty and neglect at the age of thirty.

Oldham has been called ‘the laureate of the Popish Plot frenzy,’ and it has been truly said of him that ‘his laurels are accordingly stained with much mire and much blood’; but the *sæeva indignatio* of the genuine satirist is there, and the vivacity and strength with which he expresses it have given him a certain sure place in our literature, in spite of his many deficiencies. The stock quotation from his works, the passage describing the servitude of the domestic chaplain in his days, shows him to great advantage. The account of the teacher’s lot, immediately preceding it, is not less interesting and vivid:—

‘ If you for orders and a gown design,  
 Consider only this, dear friend of mine,  
 The church is grown so overstocked of late,  
 That if you walk abroad, you’ll hardly meet  
 More porters now than persons in the street.  
 At every corner they are forced to ply  
 For jobs of hawking divinity;  
 And half the number of the sacred herd  
 Are fain to stroll and wander unpreferred.  
 If this, or thoughts of such a weighty charge,  
 Make you resolve to keep yourself at large,  
 For want of better opportunity  
 A school must next your sanctuary be.

Go, wed some grammar-bridewell, and a wife,  
 And there beat Greek and Latin for your life ;  
 With birchen sceptre there command at will,  
 Greater than Busby's self or Doctor Gill ;  
 But who would be to the vile drudgery bound,  
 Where there so small encouragement is found,  
 Where you, for recompense of all your pains,  
 Shall hardly reach a common fiddler's gains ?  
 For when you've toiled and laboured all you can,  
 To dung and cultivate a barren brain,  
 A dancing master shall be better paid,  
 Though he instructs the heels, and you the head.  
 To such indulgence are kind parents grown,  
 That nought costs less in breeding than a son ;  
 Nor is it hard to find a father now,  
 Shall more upon a setting-dog allow,  
 And with a freer hand reward the care  
 Of training up his spaniel than his heir.'

His connection with Dryden is nearly all that preserves  
Lord the memory of John Sheffield, Earl of Mul-  
Mulgrave, grave, and afterwards Duke of Buckingham-  
1649-1721. shire, the 'sharp-judging Adriel, the Muses' friend' of 'Absalom and Achitophel.' Besides the 'Essay on Satire' which he wrote in conjunction with Dryden, and for which Dryden was 'praised and beaten,' he produced an 'Essay on Poetry' and some smaller poems. His criticisms in verse Dryden eulogised extravagantly, and Pope thought very highly of them : he certainly handles the couplet neatly, and in a fashion which was not so common as it became a little later, but his thoughts are commonplace and his way of expressing them dull and uninspiring. The cleverest and sprightliest of his writing is an amusing set of satirical verses on the 'Election of a Laureate' at the death of Rowe (1718).

To the same group of writers as Mulgrave belongs  
Lord Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon. He,  
Roscommon, too, did literary criticism in correct iambics,  
? 1633-84. producing an 'Essay on Translated Verse,' with Horace and Boileau as his masters. He looked forward to the happy time when English poetry would be a good deal more 'correct,' its native barbarisms satisfactorily expelled, and the newly discovered decencies of common-

sense,, control, and regularity of workmanship properly acclimatised :—

‘ O may I live to hail the glorious day,  
And sing loud paens through the crowded way,  
When in triumphant state the British Muse,  
True to herself, shall barbarous aid refuse,  
And in the Roman majesty appear,  
Which none knows better, and none comes so near.’

He meant very well evidently, but his talent was of the smallest; yet he and others like him did something for Dryden, something to smooth the way for Pope, and are not altogether to be disregarded because of the littleness of their poetic achievement and the absence of anything like genuine poetry from their works. Roscommon is, moreover, interesting as having essayed blank verse in his translation of Horace's ‘Ars Poetica.’ It is the only poem written in that metre between the death of Milton and the end of the seventeenth century; and perhaps no poem of its length exhibits such an absolutely incompetent handling of blank verse.

Another lordly poet, also connected with Dryden, is Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, the Eugenius  
Lord Dorset, 1637-1706. of the ‘Essay on Dramatic Poesie,’ and a descendant of the poet Sackville of Queen Elizabeth's days. He, too, tried the satirical vein; but it is as a writer of lyrics which form a sort of link between Suckling and the Cavalier poets on the one hand, and Gay and Prior on the other, that he is most worthy of notice. His witty ballad ‘To all you Ladies now on Land’ is now almost his only composition that is remembered; it was written at sea in the Dutch War of 1665, and begins thus:—

‘ To all you ladies now on land,  
We men at sea indite;  
But first would have you understand  
How hard it is to write;  
The Muses now and Neptune too  
We must implore to write to you,  
With a fa la la la la.

For though the Muses should prove kind,  
And fill our empty brain;

Yet if rough Neptune rouse the wind,  
 To wave the azure main,  
 Our paper, pen, and ink, and we,  
 Roll up and down our ships at sea  
 With a fa la la la la.

Then if we write not by each post,  
 Think not we are unkind ;  
 Nor yet conclude our ships are lost  
 By Dutchmen or by wind :  
 Our tears we'll send a speedier way,  
 The tide shall bring them twice a day  
 With a fa la la la la.'

To conclude this account of the Court group we have a word for John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, a man of infamous character and considerable talent and wit. His verses 'On Nothing,' and his mock epitaph on King Charles II., are the best known of his productions. The latter runs thus:—

'Here lies our sovereign lord the king,  
 Whose word no man relies on—  
 Who never said a foolish thing,  
 And never did a wise one.'

He tried his hand on an adaptation of a play by Beaumont and Fletcher ('Valentinian'), and wrote satires not now worthy of note. Johnson credits his writings with 'sprightliness and vigour,' but observes, with his usual sense, that 'there is no particular character in them.' It is a remark that would apply with equal justice to most of the minor verse-writing of that age.

Nahum Tate, Dryden's assistant, succeeded Shadwell, Nahum Tate, 1652-1715. Dryden's foe, in the Laureateship in 1692. He has been described as 'the author of the worst alterations of Shakespeare, the worst version of the Psalms, and the worst continuation of a great poem ("Absalom and Achitophel") extant.' He wrote various poems and plays, now of no account; the only work he is remembered by is his share in the second part of 'Absalom and Achitophel.' No doubt the wit and satire were all Dryden's suggestion, but Tate seems to have learned Dryden's versification much as Fenton and

Broome afterwards did Pope's. In conjunction with one Nicholas Brady, Tate executed an unpoetical metrical version of the Psalms, which still survives. His third and worst crime was his adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Lear,' to which he gave a happy ending by introducing a love intrigue between Edgar and Cordelia. Tate's version long kept the stage, and will serve to show how low dramatic taste had fallen in his day. But we will deal with this in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE DRAMA FROM THE RESTORATION TO ABOUT 1714.

IN 1656 Davenant, under the pretext of giving entertainments, had smuggled his 'Siege of Rhodes' on to the stage: it was a blend of the opera and the heroic play, almost all the recitative being in heroic couplets. When the theatres were reopened in 1660, no one knew what to supply to suit the altered times, and the first few years were spent in making dramatic experiments. Two dramatic companies received patents: the Duke of York's with Sir William Davenant, formally appointed poet laureate, as manager, and the King's under Killigrew. Who were to write plays for them? and in what style? Shirley, 'the last of the great race,' lived on till 1666, but wrote no more. Elizabethan drama was dead, and when we read some of the later dramatic blank verse we cease to mourn. Here is a sample from Suckling:—

'Well, what can to-morrow do?  
"Twill cure the sense of honour lost;  
I and my discontents shall rest together,  
What hurt is there in this? But death against  
The will is but a slovenly kind of potion;  
And, though prescribed by Heaven, it goes against men's  
stomachs.'

Davenant was the first man of mark or merit who stepped into the breach, Dryden was the second, Sir George Etherege the third. Davenant revised his 'Siege of Rhodes,' and added a second part, abounding in heroic dialogue. Dryden and Etherege produced tragi-comedies, the tragic portions of which were in rhymed heroics. Thus the way was prepared for the famous 'heroic plays' (called on p. 428 'tragedies in rhyme').

Exactly what plays are to be included under the term 'heroic plays' is still an open question. Some <sup>Heroic</sup> writers restrict the term to tragedies in 'heroic' Plays. couplets; others seek the justification of the term in the character of a play without reference to the verse medium, and thus include plays of a 'heroic' character written in blank verse, such as Lee's 'Rival Queens.' 'Heroic plays' then may be defined as plays, usually written in heroic couplets, in which, in Dryden's words, the dramatist draws 'all things as far above the ordinary proportion of the stage as that is beyond the common words and actions of human life.' It follows that an 'heroic play' must be a tragedy, because the necessary 'elevation' of style is incompatible with comedy. Amongst plays of this class are Dryden's five<sup>1</sup>: 'Indian Emperor,' 'Tyrannic Love,' 'Conquest of Granada' (two parts), and 'Aureng-Zebe'; the Earl of Orrery's 'Mustapha' and five others; Settle's 'Empress of Morocco,' Lee's 'Nero,' and Otway's 'Don Carlos.' There are many more.

The Elizabethan dramatists went right by instinct; the Restoration dramatists went wrong by rule. The heroic play of this period is the heroic romance brought into theatrical compass, and lifted (or degraded) into metallic verse. A misapprehension of the fundamental character and limits of two distinct kinds of poetry, epic and dramatic, led to the perpetration of this monstrous species. Just as the heroes of the extraordinary romances of the Scudéry school were lifted to a ridiculous height of virtue above ordinary men, so the heroic tragedy 'affected a tone of romantic enthusiasm and superhuman elevation far removed from nature and common sense.' Self-sacrifice was pushed to the verge of caricature; the heroes were without exception supernaturally brave; an impossible ideal of heroic and amorous perfection was sought at the expense of all the ordinary feelings of nature.

For such an extraordinary level of sentiment the ordinary resources of language naturally did not suffice.

<sup>1</sup> He also collaborated with Howard in 'The Indian Queen' (1664)

On one hand, the wire-drawn subtleties and the abstruse casuistry of the metaphysics of love demanded corresponding refinements of language ; on another, the striking, unexpected, and often grotesque incidents, the apparently purposeless embroilments of the action, and the exaggerated ‘heroism’ of the whole required to be kept in countenance by powerful declamation, which too often degenerated into mere rant and fustian, and to be expressed in verse characterised by majesty, splendour, and ease.

‘The Conquest of Granada’ is at once the triumph and the *reductio ad absurdum* of the style. How it was that this play, or still more ‘Tyrannic Love,’ was not driven off the stage by the uncontrollable laughter of the audience one can now hardly understand. It is not only that no adequate motive is ever shown for the actions of the characters ; they neither love nor hate nor talk nor do anything whatever like rational human beings. The conclusion of ‘Tyrannic Love’ is to modern ears screaming farce. In ‘The Conquest of Granada’ Almanzor performs impossible feats of valour, and changes sides on the least pretext. In the course of a few hours he captures the king’s betrothed, becomes madly enamoured of her, declares his passion, overbears her reluctance, deserts to the enemy in order to win her, conquers his former friends, replaces the king on his throne, asks for the hand of the lady, is refused, and is off again to give his invaluable assistance to another foe. The supine neglect which permits him to walk over to the opponent’s side whenever he loses his temper is delightful. But absurdity is rampant throughout the heroic plays. The speeches are all couched in a style of inflated bombast, though we find in them an occasional, and usually inappropriate, fine line or fine passage.

The famous ‘Rehearsal,’ in which the heroic plays were ridiculed with remarkable wit, was first performed in December 1671. It had long been in preparation, Villiers Duke of Buckingham, the ostensible author, being aided, it is said, by ‘Hudibras’ Butler, Sprat, Bishop of Rochester, and Martin Clifford, Master of the Charterhouse. Butler’s hand has been traced

in many of the parodies of heroic fiction. The wit and the justice of the satire are indisputable. Dryden took the attack good-humouredly. Indeed, keen as the satire was, it was only in part directed against him. Bayes, the hero, was at first intended for Davenant and was transferred to Dryden only after the former's death in 1668. The heroic plays selected for parody and ridicule include in addition to Dryden's some by Davenant, Mrs. Behn, Sir W. Killigrew, and others. 'The Rehearsal' was so far from giving the species its *coup de grâce* that for some years it rather served as an advertisement. Dryden continued to write heroic plays until 1675 ; and 'The Rehearsal' was for years amplified and re-edited, with parodies on fresh plays as they appeared.

Excellent burlesque as it is, it is difficult for that reason to give any adequate summary of 'The Rehearsal.'

Johnson, a man about town, meets Smith, who has just come up from the country, and together they go with Bayes to see the rehearsal of his play, 'The Two Kings of Brentford,' which is full of motiveless action. As it proceeds Bayes is constantly explaining and commenting to Johnson and Smith, who ask inconvenient questions and make uncomplimentary remarks. Two opposing generals fight a battle by giving terrific orders to imaginary armies of Putney Pikes and Chiswickians. Drawcansir, a terrible warrior who slays whole armies, appears late in the play without any introduction. The treatment is on the whole farcical. The two Kings descend from the clouds. On reaching earth one proposes to the other to have a dance ; this is interrupted by the announcement :—

‘The Army’s at the door, and in disguise  
Demands a word with both your Majesties. . . .

*1 King.* Here, take five guineas for those warlike men.

*2 King.* And here’s five more ; that makes the sum just ten.

*1 Herald.* We have not seen so much the Lord knows when.’

While Bayes is engaged with an actor, Johnson and Smith go out in disgust. Bayes rushes out to bring them back to see the end of the play, and returns to find the actors gone to dinner.

‘A battle is fought between foot and great hobbyhorses. •At last Drawcansir comes in, and kills ‘em all on both sides. . . .

*Bayes.* There’s a brave fellow for you now, Sirs. I have read of your Hector, your Achilles, and a hundred more; but I defy all your histories, and your romances too, igad, to show me one such conqueror as this Drawcansir. -

*Johnson.* I swear I think you may.

*Smith.* But, Mr. Bayes, how shall all these dead men go off? for I see none alive to help ‘em.

*Bayes.* Go off! Why, as they came on; upon their legs: how should they go off? Why, do you think the people do not know they are not dead? He is mighty ignorant, poor man; your friend here is very silly, Mr. Johnson, igad, he is. Come, Sir, I’ll show you go off. Rise, Sirs, and go about your business. There’s go off for you. . . .

#### EPILOGUE.

Wherefore, for ours, and for the kingdom’s peace,  
May this prodigious way of writing cease.  
Let’s have, at least once in our lives, a time  
When we may hear some reason, not all rhyme.  
We have these ten years felt its influence;  
Pray let this prove a year of prose and sense.’

Sentimentalism, which is the reaction of the pampered  
Restoration Tragedy. sensual fantasy on the higher judgment, brands  
most of the tragedy of a corrupt time. Comedy  
was written much more with the professional  
idea of suiting the stage and the particular time. Tragedy,  
other than ‘heroic,’ was represented mainly by Dryden  
and Otway. The latter surpasses Dryden in tragic power  
and in a greater mastery of the pathetic. But his pathos  
arises from the situations he creates rather than from the  
characters, which, though more natural than Dryden’s, are  
not as a rule interesting in themselves.

Otway’s ‘Venice Preserved’ (1682), written in blank  
Thomas Otway, 1652-1685. verse, is founded on an historical novel by St. Réal, itself based on an actual conspiracy of 1618, the details of which were kept secret by the Venetian Republic. The alternative title, ‘A Plot Discovered,’ was apparently intended to borrow interest from the Popish Plot of 1678. Antonio, ‘a fine speaker in the Senate,’ is meant for Shaftesbury; his name and age correspond exactly; but the parody of Shaftesbury’s style of

speech is poor. Indeed, the comic scenes, in which Antonio appears, are a blemish to the play and are usually omitted on the stage. The play was extremely popular, and held the stage until the early nineteenth century. Byron had this tragedy in mind when writing his ‘Marino Faliero.’

The plot is as simple as its details are improbable. Belvidera’s husband, Jaffier, joins the conspiracy to ruin the republic because of his father-in-law’s cruel treatment of Belvidera, and in order to save her from want. The latter demands her husband’s confidence, and, when she gains it, persuades him to break his solemn oath, given with so many (rather theatrical) declarations of steadfastness. But the characters are far more real than the circumstances. Pierre, Jaffier, and Belvidera are all well drawn, and have blood in their veins ; we take part with them against the incongruous motives and actions which Otway ascribes to them. We feel that they are real, though the plot is theatrical. The best passages are the exquisitely tender love-scenes of Belvidera and Jaffier, and the great scene where Belvidera saves her father and the state. Scott said : ‘The talents of Otway, in his scenes of passionate affection, rival at least, and sometimes excel, those of Shakespeare.’ Courthope replies : ‘Otway does not, like Shakespeare, conceive his dramas organically, so as to give an ideal representation of real life and nature. . . . The stage situations caused by the conflicts between love and conscience, love and friendship, public and private duties, are admirable ; but of the nature of man in society, as it is represented to us in “Julius Caesar,” all trace has disappeared.’

There are a few other writers of tragedy who deserve Other Tragic Writers: more than a passing mention. To Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery was long erroneously given, on the strength of a reference in Dryden’s Preface to ‘The Rival Ladies’ (1664), the credit of having been the ‘father’ of the heroic play. But Orrery’s earliest play was certainly produced later than Dryden and Howard’s ‘Indian Queen,’ and Davenant’s ‘Siege of Rhodes’ was earlier still. Orrery wrote six tragedies, all heroic, of which the best is ‘Mustapha, the

Son of Solyman the Magnificent,' and one feeble comedy. His tragedies are but mediocre performances, though showing some skill in the portrayal of character combined with a dignified style. Orrery was also the author of a ponderous heroic romance called 'Parthenissa' (see p. 428, note 1).

Lee, who has already been mentioned, was a tragic writer of real imagination and considerable power of appealing to the emotions. He began life as an actor, but, failing on the stage, produced his first play, 'Nero,' an heroic tragedy, at the age of twenty. His best play is unquestionably 'The Rival Queens' (not an heroic play). There is much true poetry in his work, in spite of a constant tendency to bombast and turgidity.

Nicholas Rowe is the author of a number of sentimental plays in blank verse, which show the contending influences of Shakespeare, Racine, and the heroic sentiment. His works are almost destitute of poetry, but the author shows considerable skill in scenes exciting the emotions of terror and pity. His best known plays are 'The Fair Penitent' (1703) and 'Jane Shore' (1714), both of which held the stage for many years.

The deterioration of comedy after the Restoration was, according to Macaulay, 'the effect of the prevalence of Puritanism under the Commonwealth.' 'But,' retorted Leslie Stephen, 'in what sense, in the first place, was there a reaction at all? The Puritans had suppressed the stage when it was already far gone in decay, because it no longer satisfied the great bulk of the nation. The reaction does not imply that the drama regained its old position. When the rule of the saints was broken down, the stage did not become again a national organ. A very small minority of the people can ever have seen a performance. From the theatre, therefore, we can only argue directly to the small circle of the rowdy debauchees who gathered round the new king. It may certainly be true, but it was not proved from their behaviour, that the national morality deteriorated.'

Again, disapproval of the stage was not confined to the

Puritans: Jeremy Collier and William Law, who both attacked it, were Tories and High Churchmen. Thus we see how the drama, when once it had divorced itself from the strongest sentiments and aspirations of the nation, fell into gradual decay. It had come to represent the ideas and tastes of a class composed of the seamy side of the town; and the nation, unable to modify it in the direction of decency, relinquished it to the rakes and fribbles of the metropolis. With the death of Farquhar the literary drama became a mere 'survival,' a condition in which it remained till the days of Goldsmith and Sheridan.

Comedy, then, degenerated into a representation of manners, the 'comedy of manuers.' In the school of Etherege and Wycherley idealism entirely disappeared; their aim was to copy minutely the manners of domestic life. Vice and folly were not to be moralised about or ridiculed, they were to be photographed. Realism is everything, morality nothing. A poor and shallow invention of plot is pieced out by witty and sparkling dialogue; the form is almost always prose, as best befitting an essentially unpoetic art.

Etherege was one of the first to use the heroic couplet  
 Sir George for the whole of the serious part of a play.<sup>1</sup>  
 Etherege, This was in the tragi-comedy 'Love in a Tub,'  
 1685-1691. acted in 1664. Etherege's two comedies, 'She Would If She Could' (1668—'there was 1,000 people put back that could not have room in the pit,' Pepys tells us of the first performance) and 'The Man of Mode' (1676) are written in prose.

Etherege's chief claim to our attention is that he invented the comedy of intrigue, in which he was followed by Congreve and by Sheridan. Up to his time the stage had advanced very little from the manner of Ben Jonson, but Etherege's butterflies are far less types than realities. His dialogue is sparkling, but his plays are marred by their utter indecency, though we are told they are faithful

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<sup>1</sup> In the 'Rival Ladies' (1663) Dryden had introduced about one hundred lines in heroic couplets. The first serious play wholly in heroic verse was Howard and Dryden's 'Indian Queen' (produced January 1664), and this was followed in a few months by Orrery's 'Henry V.' and Etherege's 'Love in a Tub.'

realistic representations of the Restoration Court circles. One of his characters, the beau Sir Fopling Flutter, 'The Man of Mode,' achieved great fame upon the stage. This play has the negative merit of being the least gross of his writings, but this is faint praise.

Aphra Behn deserves mention as our first professional <sup>Aphra Behn, authoress.</sup> She was the daughter of a barber <sup>1640-89.</sup> at Wye in Kent, and after a visit to Surinam married a Dutchman called Behn. Returning to London after her husband's death she produced many plays, chiefly comedies, as well as novels and poems. She was a friend of Dryden's and of Otway's. Her plays are as coarse as those of her male contemporaries, and owed their success largely to the fact that a woman was the writer. They exhibit no originality and are deservedly forgotten.

Her novel 'Orinooko' was founded upon a real slave tragedy, an African prince of that name, whom she had met when in Surinam, having been stolen from his native country and sold as a slave. It must never be forgotten of the unfortunate Aphra Behn, whose loose pen has given her not unjustly a bad name in our literature, that she was the first to attempt to rouse a slumbering morality to the evils and horrors of the slave trade. 'Orinooko' has many powerful and pathetic pages, and is, in its purpose, the precursor of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' A version of 'Orinooko,' dramatised by Thomas Southerne, for a long time held the stage.

Congreve is easily the greatest writer in England of the <sup>William</sup> Comedy of Manners, and wrote the best <sup>?1640-1716.</sup> dramatic prose since the death of Shakespeare. Wycherley is generally put next to Congreve. Macaulay's judgment seems correct: 'Wycherley was a worse Congreve. . . . Both were gentlemen liberally educated. Both led town lives and knew human nature only as it appears between Hyde Park and the Tower. Both were men of wit. Neither had much imagination. Both at an early age produced lively and profligate comedies.'

Wycherley, in fact, produced four, 'Love in a Wood'

(1672), ‘The Gentleman Dancing Master’ (1673), ‘The Country Wife’ (1675), ‘The Plain Dealer’ (1677). The last, founded upon Molière’s ‘*Le Misanthrope*,’ is by far his best play. We have in it an anticipation of ‘*The School for Scandal*’ in the amusingly spiteful gossip between Olivia and Novel. Wycherley defends himself from the charge of ‘nastiness’ in his preceding play, ‘*The Country Wife*,’ by putting a prurient attack upon that play into the mouth of his unpleasing prude Olivia. His ‘*Widow Blackacre*’ is a new humour in English—a litigious but grammatical Mrs. Malaprop, with a great knowledge of Norman-French, who is training Jerry, her lout of a son, to the law. She claims to have been born ‘Ann’ undec’ Caroli prim,’ and describes her older suitor, Major Oldfox, as ‘my walking hospital of an ancient foundation.’ A most humorous scene is that in which Manly, the Plain Dealer, tests his pretended friends in Westminster Hall, in order to get rid of them; so, too, is the scene in which the vicious Olivia makes love to Fidelia, a woman in man’s clothes, who has followed Manly to sea for love of him.

‘It is not too much to say,’ writes Macaulay, ‘that there is hardly anything in his plays of which the hint is not to be found elsewhere. . . . The groundwork of the “Plain Dealer” is taken from the “*Misanthrope*.” One whole scene is almost translated from the “*Critique de l’Ecole des Femmes*.” Fidelia is Shakespeare’s Viola stolen and marred in the stealing; and the Widow Blackacre, beyond comparison Wycherley’s best comic character, is the Countess in Racine’s “*Plaideurs*,” talking the jargon of English instead of that of French chicane. The only thing original about Wycherley, the only thing which he could furnish from his own mind in inexhaustible abundance, was profligacy. It is curious to observe how everything that he touched, however pure and noble, took in an instant the colour of his own mind.’ He adds that Wycherley is protected against critics ‘as a skunk is against the hunters. It is safe, because it is too filthy to handle, and too noisome even to approach.’

William Congreve was born in Yorkshire and educated at Kilkenny College and Trinity College, Dublin. He had Swift as a schoolfellow. As a painter of contemporary life and manners, studied from the vantage point of fashion, Congreve has no equal. His great qualities are lightness of touch in treating the foibles of society, a remarkable power of continuous irony and paradox, and an incomparable sense for rhythmical prose of combined antithesis and balance. His wit is unsurpassed, even by Sheridan.

The characters of his 'Love for Love' (1695), says Ewald, 'are less artificial and less inspired by unpleasant motives than usual. There are no revolting scoundrels; and the lovers really have some love. The plot is ingenious without being perplexing, and full of stage effect; while the dialogue, instead of acting merely as a vehicle for wit, is suited to the development of the story and the condition of the speakers. His other comedies are 'The Old Bachelor' (1693), which won an instantaneous success and first made its author's name; 'The Double-Dealer' (1693); and what is generally considered his masterpiece, 'The Way of the World' (1700), in which comes his best character, the bewitching heroine Millamant. Macaulay wrote of this last that its leading situations are 'superior to anything to be found in the whole range of English comedy from the Civil War downwards.' It is quite inexplicable to us that this play should have failed on the stage.'

Congreve's one tragedy, 'The Mourning Bride' (1697), has some fine passages, but is a poor thing compared with Otway's 'Venice Preserved.' The opening line,

'Music has charms to soothe a savage breast,'  
has added to our stock of quotations, as has

'Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned,  
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.'

Dr. Johnson gave extravagant praise to the description of a cathedral in the second act:—

'No, all is hushed and still as death. 'Tis dreadful!  
How reverend is the face of this tall pile,

' Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads  
 To bear aloft its arched and ponderous roof,  
 By its own weight made steadfast and immovable,  
 Looking tranquillity. It strikes an awe  
 And terror on my aching sight ; the tombs  
 And monumental caves of death look cold,  
 And shoot a chillness to my trembling heart.'

A fine passage, but hardly, as Johnson said, finer than anything in the whole of Shakespeare.

<sup>Sir John</sup> Vanbrugh enjoys double fame as architect and as dramatist. His chief architectural works are <sup>1661-1726.</sup> the palaces of Blenheim, Dalkeith, and Castle Howard. His most famous plays are 'The Relapse' (1696) and 'The Provoked Wife' (1697). Lord Foppington in 'The Relapse' is an excellent character-sketch of the fop of the period, and reminds us of Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter, although the character is admittedly derived from Sir Novelty Fashion in Colley Cibber's 'Love's Last Shift.' Two other famous characters in 'The Relapse,' who provide the fun of the piece, are Miss Hoyden and Sir Tunbelly Clumsy. This play is easily accessible to the general reader because it was stolen by Sheridan, cut down a little, re-christened 'A Trip to Scarborough,' and is now usually bound up with his works. 'The Provoked Wife' is Vanbrugh's masterpiece, and his Sir John Brute in that play is his best drawn character. His editor, Leigh Hunt, says well of him that of feeling he shows little or none. 'His plots are interesting without having the teasing perplexity of Congreve's; and he is more uniformly strong than Farquhar and cheerful than Wycherley. . . . His style is so natural and straightforward that Cibber says the actors preferred it to every other, it was so easy to learn by rote.'

<sup>The Jeremy</sup> Collier, in his 'Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage' (1699), <sup>Collier</sup> Controversy. singled out Congreve and Vanbrugh as specially bad examples, and instanced in particular 'The Provoked Wife' of the latter dramatist and (very foolishly) Congreve's tragedy, 'The Mourning Bride.'

There is no doubt that the great non-juring divine went too far in his attack. He was not content with assailing the real evils of the Restoration stage, the gross indecencies, and the subtle belittling of all virtue; but he objected strongly to the presentation of wicked characters on the stage, or to the putting in their mouths of impious sentiments appropriate to them, or to any reference to the Bible in comedy, or to the introduction into literature in any circumstances of ministers of any religion. Collier's attack lacked breadth of view and charity, and though for a short time it seemed to triumph by eliciting a proclamation from the king and arousing the activity of the Middlesex magistrates against actors and writers, yet it served in the long run only to advertise the plays and the dramatists attacked; all this too in spite of the fact that the answers which it elicited from Congreve and Vanbrugh, amongst others, were very flat, failing to seize the excellent opportunity which the divine had given them for effective retort.

An illustration of the parson's wit was his retort upon Congreve, who, with his wonted affectation, said that he set no store upon his 'Old Bachelor,' which he wrote only to amuse himself in a slow recovery from a fit of sickness. 'What his disease was,' replied Collier, 'I am not to enquire; but it must be a very ill one to be worse than the remedy.'

The veteran Dryden did not take part in the controversy. In his usual manly way he admitted that Collier had 'taxed him justly,' but, as he added, and with truth, his attacker 'is too much given to horseplay in his raillery, and comes to battle like a dictator from the plough. I will not say "the zeal of God's house has eaten him up," but I am sure it has devoured some part of his good manners and civility.'

Farquhar summed up this controversy even better in his first publication, the short sketch 'Adventures of Covent Garden' (quoted from Leigh Hunt): 'Mr. Collier showed too much malice and rancour for a churchman and his adversaries too little wit for the character of poets.' Vanbrugh, however,

George  
Farquhar,  
1678-1707.

made a very good point when he said that Collier made 'debauches in piety as other men did in drink.'

Farquhar is the link between the drama of Congreve and the slighter, more modern comedy of Goldsmith and Sheridan. Farquhar's plays are overflowing with animal spirits, and, although coarse, are not vicious. As Leigh Hunt puts it, 'We have little sympathy for Vanbrugh's heroes and no respect at all. But we have every sort of good-will towards Farquhar's heroes, who have as many peccadilloes to answer for, and play as many rogues' tricks, but are honest fellows at bottom. . . . Farquhar makes us laugh from pleasure oftener than from malice.' Farquhar's best comedies are '*The Recruiting Officer*', '*Love and a Bottle*' (this title is not a bad criticism of all Farquhar's work), and '*The Beaux' Stratagem*' (1706).

With Farquhar we take leave of an ungrateful subject, the Restoration Drama, for which no moralist has found a defence except the pure-hearted Charles Lamb. In his quaint fantastic way, while admitting this drama to be utterly immoral, yet he defended it as being unharful on the ground that the whole world in which the characters moved is unreal, a world which knows nothing of morality or the Ten Commandments. The answer, of course, as Macaulay saw, is that the world is only too real, and the attractiveness of the immorality is rendered all the more dangerous by the cleverness and wit which the writers have prostituted in a bad cause.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### DRYDEN'S CONTEMPORARIES—THE RISE OF THE NEW PROSE.

THE Restoration is an important landmark in English History, and, as may easily be surmised, it is an equally important landmark in English Literature, for the history of a country is always reflected in its literature, if that literature be adequate. The Court had been in exile in France and was restored; we may say without much exaggeration that English Literature had been in exile in France, had been to school there, had learnt many things good and bad, and was now restored with the Court and was prepared to experiment with its new learning. ‘Without much exaggeration’ this may be said, because it must be remembered that the day had not yet dawned for the divorce of Literature from the Court, of the literary man from the patron.

Restoration and Renovation were the keynotes of English life: everything was to be made new again. We have already spoken of French influence upon the new drama and upon the new verse; it is not a matter of wonder that English prose should be renovated under the same influence, and here the influence was all for good, for from the days of Montaigne till to-day the French have been supreme in prose and in literary criticism. Montaigne was to be read in English at the time Bacon’s Essays were appearing; a tract of the philosopher Descartes was published in an English dress in 1650, Pascal’s masterpiece in 1657, and about the same time Rabelais in the version of Urquhart. The translations of these epoch-making books were followed within the next thirty years by translations of Bossuet, La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, and Boileau.

As will be concluded, this change in our literature is conscious. In the drama ‘new’ and ‘the new writing’

are the cant words which are naturally bantered over and over again in 'The Rehearsal':—'the *new* kind of wits'; 'you must know, this is the *new* kind of writing,' 'if I writ, sir, to please the Country, I should have followed the old plain way, but I write for persons of Quality'; 'this *new* kind of foppery,' and so forth. The Royal Society, then newly founded, appointed in 1664 a committee consisting of Dryden, Sprat, Evelyn, and Waller to improve the English language, and an attempt was made under the same auspices to found an English Academy upon the model of the *Académie Française*.

Sprat, in the 'History of the Royal Society,' speaks of the reformation of English 'Discourse' as one of its main objects: 'They have been most vigorous in putting in execution the only remedy that can be found for this *extravagance* (i.e. "the luxury and abundance of speech"), and that has been a constant resolution to reject all amplification, digressions, and swellings of style; to return back to the primitive purity and shortness, when men delivered so many *things* almost in an equal number of *words*. They have exacted from all their members a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clear sense; a native easiness; bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness as they can; and preferring the language of artisans, countrymen, and merchants before that of wits or scholars.'

• This is the manifesto of English prose speech, just as Wordsworth's famous Preface was to be that of English verse speech.

Sprat pointed out how harmful the exuberant style was to Natural Philosophy, the chief concern of the Royal Society. The growing love of science, then made fashionable by a Royal Society, led to the desire for a plain scientific language, and to the use of it by the new scientific writers who were springing up on all sides. This through the medium of the new scientific literary criticism reacted strongly upon all the prose as the merits of the new prose style began to be appreciated. It is not surprising then that the first literary work in which we see the new style at its best is a work of literary criticism, Dryden's 'Essay

on Dramatic Poesie,' published in 1667. Mr. Tilley <sup>1</sup> points out that 'in the epistle dedicatory of "The Rival Ladies" (published 1664), and in the earlier part of the "Essay on Dramatic Poesie," written in the summer of 1665, his management of the clause is still somewhat uncertain. It is not till Neander, who represents Dryden, joins in the discussion that we recognise our first master of modern prose.' This is true, if we always remember that Shakespeare and the Elizabethan dramatists preceded Dryden, and that, as we have said elsewhere, the right kind of prose was there all the time waiting, like America, to be discovered. As the authority cited says in his next sentence, 'In the "Essay on Dramatic Poesie" *the conversational character* of Dryden's style is, also, already apparent.'

To sum up the whole matter then in a nutshell, we may say that French influence and the needs of Science caused the discovery that Shakespeare's colloquial prose was to be the model of our new prose style, although Shakespeare's name of course was not brought into the discussion. The third great influence which helped chiefly to popularise the new prose style was the rise into importance of the Newspaper Press and its stimulation of the taste for the pithy paragraph and the pithy Essay.

Cowley's work as a prose-writer appeared mainly after the Restoration; and it will be remembered Cowley (Vol. I, <sup>Abraham</sup> Ch. XVIII.)<sup>1</sup>, that in our account of it, in connection with his poems, we called attention to the fact that he is one of the first of the new school of elegant yet strong and direct wielders of literary prose. For the best examples of this his 'Essays' should be referred to; but his 'Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy' has, however, another and a peculiar interest of its own as connecting the poet with the tendency of the age to examine into the physical and material reasons of things, which had, as one of its results, the establishment of the Royal Society. Of this it may be well to give a brief account here.

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. VIII, p. 370.

The Royal Society had its beginnings in the interest in Physical and Mathematic Science which had sprung up during the seventeenth century. <sup>The Royal Society, founded 1602.</sup> Dr. Wilkins, its founder (afterwards Bishop of Chester), had written during the reign of Charles I. his fantastic 'Discovery of a New World' and his 'Discourse' tending to prove that it is probable our earth is one of the planets. After the Restoration his chief work is a cumbersome, dull treatise on a philosophical language which he invented, and on the principles and duties of natural religion.

Cowley (see p. 430), who had studied medicine and botany in England under the Commonwealth, produced his 'Plantarum Libri duo' in 1662. Sprat, who, as we have said

<sup>Thomas Sprat, 1633-1713.</sup> above, wrote the 'History of the Royal Society' in good prose, was one of its early members.

This Sprat wrote poems (of no great account) on 'The Death of Cromwell,' 'The Plague of Athens,' 'The Death of Mr. Cowley,' etc., and became Bishop of Rochester: his prose includes some 'Sermons,' which have been highly praised. Butler's name connects itself with the Society by his ridicule of its proceedings; while Dryden, Denham, Waller, Wren, Evelyn, Barrow, Wallis, Newton, Ray, Boyle, and many other distinguished men of the age are ranked among its members. Concerning three or four of these names, a few words may be in place

<sup>Isaac Barrow, 1630-77.</sup> here. Barrow gained great fame in science as a mathematician, and has left a large amount of writing in Latin on geometry. His chief English works are a number of sermons. He was succeeded in his professorship at Gresham College by Sir

<sup>Sir Isaac Newton, 1642-1727.</sup> Isaac Newton, the greatest of English mathematicians, who also used Latin in his chief works: the epoch-making 'Principia' appeared in 1687. Another mathematician is the Wallis

<sup>John Wallis, 1616-1703.</sup> mentioned above, a man of wit as well as learning, as he showed in his controversy with Hobbes over the squaring of the circle. The Hon. Robert Boyle has obtained a sort of limited immortality by the fact that his name is preserved by the

principle in physics sometimes known as 'Boyle's Law':

<sup>Robert Boyle,</sup> he is also perpetuated in the Boyle lectures founded for 'the defence of natural and revealed religion.' He was a somewhat voluminous writer

on scientific and semi-scientific subjects; and among the more notable of his writings are 'Physiological Essays,' 'A Letter on Seraphic Love,' 'The Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy,' and 'Occasional Reflections upon Several Subjects.' It is one of these last which Swift parodied in his 'Meditations upon a Broomstick.'

Evelyn was a voluminous and learned writer who treated

<sup>John Evelyn,</sup> all manner of subjects, from 'Forest-Trees' ('Sylva,' 1664) to 'The Ladies' Dressing-Room' (or 'Mundus Muliebris,' 1690); from 'A Discourse of the Earth' (or 'Terra,' 1675) to 'A Discourse of Sallets' (or 'Acetaria,' 1699).

He wrote on gardening, fashions, engraving, medals, etc., in clear but not particularly brilliant prose. He was a scholar and a man of taste, but scarcely of much power. The work which he left that is of most importance to posterity will be found in his 'Diary,' a valuable record, begun before the writer had reached manhood and extending over more than half a century.

A more famous 'Diary' is that begun by Pepys in the year of the Restoration, and carefully kept up for more than nine years, till failing sight compelled the author to abandon it. Pepys, though of humble origin, was a protégé of the Earl of Sandwich, through whose influence he became, shortly after the Restoration, Clerk of the Acts to the Admiralty Board, a position corresponding to the modern secretaryship. Pepys was an able and painstaking official, and early attracted the notice and friendship of James Duke of York (afterwards James II.), whose interest in the Navy was one of his redeeming features. Thanks to this Pepys moved among the fashionable and great world of the time. He wrote in cipher, evidently intending his criticisms on men and women, on plays and books and public events, his private accounts, his successes and disappointments, to be read by none but himself. He gossips to himself in a chatty,

pleasant, self-complacent way, and has left us some most vivid pictures of the society of his times. The following specimen gives a good example of the way in which public and private concerns jostle one another in his vivacious pages :—

‘23rd [Nov. 1663]—To St. Paul’s Churchyard, and there bespoke “Rushworth’s Collections” and “Scobell’s Acts of the Long Parliament,” etc., which I will make the King pay for as to the office, and so I do not break my vow at all. With Alderman Backewell, talking of the new money, which he says will never be counterfeited, he believes ; but it so deadly inconvenient for telling, it is so thick, and the edges are made to turn up.

25th.—To my Lord Sandwich, and there I did present him with Mr. Barlow’s “Terella,” with which he was very much pleased, and he did show me great kindness, and by other discourse I have reason to think that he is not at all, as I feared he would be, discontented against me.

26th.—The plague, it seems, grows more and more at Amsterdam ; and we are going upon making of all ships coming from thence and Hamburg, or any other infected places, to perform their quarantine for thirty days, as Sir Richard Browne expressed it in the order of the Council, contrary to the import of the word, though, in the general acceptation, it signifies now the thing, not the time spent in doing it, in Holehaven ; a thing never done by us before.

27th.—My wife mightily pleased with my discourse of getting a trip over to Calais, or some other part of France, the next summer, in one of the yachts, and I believe I shall do it—and it makes good sport that my maid Jane dares not go ; and Bessie is wild to go, and is mad for joy, but yet will be willing to stay, if Jane hath a mind.

• 28th.—I met with Mr. Pierce, the surgeon, who tells me for good news that my Lord Sandwich is resolved to go no more to Chelsea, and told me he believed that I had been giving my Lord some counsel, which I neither denied nor affirmed. To St. Paul’s Churchyard, and there looked upon the Second Part of “Hudibras,” which I buy not, but borrow to read, to see if it be as good as the first, which the world cried so mightily up, though it hath not a good liking in me, though I had tried by twice or thrice reading to bring myself to think it witty. To-day, for certain, I am told how, in Holland, publicly they have pictured our king with reproach : one way ~~is~~ with his pockets turned the wrong side outward, hanging out empty ; another, with two courtiers picking of his pockets ; and a third, leading of two ladies, while others abuse him ; which amounts to great contempt.

29th (Lord’s day).—This morning I put on my best black cloth suit trimmed with scarlet ribbon, very neat, with my cloak lined with velvet, and a new beaver, which altogether is very noble, with my black silk knit canons I bought a month ago.’

**The Press.** One of the accompaniments of the Restoration was a considerable increase in the number of the news-sheets and the appointment of Roger l'Estrange as licenser of the press in 1663.

**Sir Roger l'Estrange, 1616-1704.** The newspaper press dates its rise from James I.'s reign, and it rapidly developed under

Charles I. and the Commonwealth. Its connection with literature during this and the preceding period is not very close, though it tended to increase the demand for, and supply of, 'occasional' writing and essays. It is to the reign of Anne, and a little later, that we must turn to find some of the best writers of the age—*e.g.* Defoe, Swift, Addison, Steele—devoting their energies to work for periodicals. L'Estrange himself is worth a word or two as a diligent journalist, compiler, and translator. He edited the 'London Gazette,' which exists as the official organ for Government announcements to this day; it was started in 1665, and was originally called the 'Oxford Gazette,' being published at Oxford to supply news of the Court, which had migrated thither on account of the Plague. L'Estrange's best work is his version of Aesop's fables. He also translated Josephus, Cicero, Seneca, Erasmus, etc., and compiled a 'Brief History of the Times.'

**Walton** Another minor translator and miscellaneous writer of the time is Charles Cotton, whose chief claim to remembrance is his connection with Izaak

**Cotton.** Walton. Some of Walton's own work, it will be remembered, was done after the Restoration (see above, p. 417); Cotton produced a second part of the 'Compleat Angler' in 1676. His other work includes translations from the French (Montaigne, Corneille, etc.), 'Virgile Travestie,' a 'Compleat Gamester,' and much else of little (or no) value.

**Sir William Temple, 1628-99.** Among the essayists of this age (if we exclude those we have mentioned as belonging by the bulk of their work to the eighteenth century), after Dryden and Cowley, Temple is pre-eminent.

Perhaps from the point of view of manner alone—of elegance of style and expression—he stands above all his

contemporaries. Temple had been our ambassador in Holland until the ascendancy of the Cabal Ministry, and published a series of 'Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands.' This is not however the work upon which his literary fame rests; we shall seek for the justification of that chiefly in his 'Miscellanea,' a small collection of essays written at various times between 1680 and 1692.

The following is an extract from his reflections 'Upon the Excesses of Grief' :—

'We bring into the world with us a poor needy uncertain life, short at the longest, and unquiet at its best. All the imaginations of the witty and the wise have been perpetually busied to find out the ways how to revive it with pleasures, or relieve it with diversions; how to compose it with ease, and settle it with safety. To some of these ends have been employed the institutions of law-givers, the reasonings of philosophers, the inventions of poets, the pains of labouring men, and the extravagances of voluptuaries. All the world is perpetually at work about nothing else, but only that our poor mortal lives should pass the easier and happier for that little time we possess them, or else end the better when we lose them. Upon this occasion riches came to be coveted, honours to be esteemed, friendship and love to be pursued, and virtues themselves to be admired in the world. Now, Madam, is it not to bid defiance to all mankind, to condemn their universal opinions and designs, if instead of passing your life as well and as easily, you resolve to pass it as ill and as miserably, as you can; you grow insensible to the convenience of riches, the delights of honour and praise, the charms of kindness or friendship, nay to the observance or applause of virtues themselves? For who can you expect in these excesses of passion will allow you to show either temperance or fortitude, to be either prudent or just? And for your friends, I suppose, you reckon upon losing their kindness, when you have sufficiently convinced them they can never hope for any of yours, since you have none left for yourself or anything else. You declare upon all occasions you are incapable of receiving any comfort or pleasure in anything that is left in this world; and I assure you, Madam, none can ever love you that can have no hopes ever to please you.'

Among the several inquiries and endeavours after the happiness of life, the sensual men agree in pursuit of every pleasure they can start without regarding the pains of the chase, the weariness when it ends, or how little the quarry is worth: the busy and ambitious fall into the more lasting pursuits of power and riches; the speculative men prefer tranquillity of mind before the different motions of passion and appetite, or the common successions of desire and satiety, of pleasure and pain. But this may seem too dull a

principle for the happiness of life which is ever in motion ; and though passions are perhaps the stings without which they say no honey is made, yet I think all sorts of men have ever agreed they ought to be our servants and not our masters—to give us some agitation for entertainment or exercise, but never to throw our reason out of its seat. Perhaps I would not always sit still, or would be sometimes on horseback ; but I would never ride a horse that galls my flesh, or shakes my bones, or that runs away with me as he pleases, so as I can neither stop it at river or precipice. Better no passions at all than have them too violent, or such a love as instead of heightening our pleasures affords us nothing but vexation and pain.'

Of Temple it has been said that his contributions to John Locke,<sup>1632-1704.</sup> knowledge and his influence on English thought were little, but that his services to literary art were very considerable. With Locke exactly the opposite is the case : the manner of his writings is of very little value to the student of letters, but as 'the founder of a school destined to influence all subsequent national thought,' we cannot pass him over without due attention.

Locke was educated at Westminster and Oxford (where he obtained a studentship at Christ Church), studied medicine there and abroad, and came under the notice of Shaftesbury, who obtained for him a post in the Civil Service. At the fall of Shaftesbury (1682) Locke fell into disfavour, and was subsequently deprived of his office. After the Revolution he returned from Holland (1689), and was appointed successively Commissioner of Appeals and Commissioner of Trade, which latter post he held till within a few years of his death. His more important writings belong to the year of his return from Holland and the following one. To the year 1689 belongs his first letter concerning 'Toleration,' which was written in Latin and published in Holland. It was followed by a second letter (in English, 1690), and by a third (1692). The work which has established his fame as a philosopher, 'The Essay on the Human Understanding,' appeared in 1690, as did also the two treatises on 'Government' and 'Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.' The 'Thoughts concerning Education' belong to the year 1693, and 'The Reasonableness of Christianity' to 1695.

Locke's 'epoch-making' work is undoubtedly the 'Essay on the Human Understanding,' which is divided into four books. The 'Essay,' says Professor Campbell Fraser, 'presents the philosophical foundation of the right of the individual thinker to follow freely the findings of experience; and, partly even by its metaphysical defects, it has suggested the chief problems which have occupied modern thinkers since it appeared. Its "design," according to its own words, was "to inquire into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge, together with the grounds of belief, opinion, and assent";—and this as a means to correct the chief cause of human error, which its author found in men's proneness to extend their inquiries to matters beyond their reach, and then to cover their ignorance by empty phrases, or by dogmas which they assumed to be "innate," and therefore out of the reach of criticism. He wanted to make a faithful report, founded simply upon mental facts, as to how far a merely human understanding can go, in the way either of certain knowledge or of more or less probable presumption; and in what man must be contented with ignorance. Although a true report might show that human knowledge must for ever "fall far short of perfect comprehension of whatsoever is," it might be "sufficient for our state"; and at any rate we cannot overcome facts.'

The following is Locke's introduction to the Third Book of the 'Essay,' which is devoted to 'Words':—

'The Commonwealth of Learning is not at this time without Master Builders, whose mighty designs, in advancing the Sciences, will leave lasting monuments to the admiration of posterity. But every one must not hope to be a Boyle or a Sydenham; and in an age that produces such masters as the great Huygenius and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain, 'tis ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge; which certainly had been very much more advanced in the world, if the endeavours of ingenious and industrious men had not been much cumbered with the learned but frivolous use of uncouth, affected, or unintelligible terms introduced into the science and there made an art of, to that degree that philosophy, which is nothing but the true knowledge of things, was thought unfit or incapable to be brought into well-bred company and polite conversation.

Vague and insignificant forms of speech and abuse of language have so long passed for mysteries of science; and hard or misapplied words, with little or no meaning, have, by prescription, such a right to be mistaken for deep learning and height of speculation, that it will not be easy to persuade either those who speak or those who hear them, that they are but the covers of ignorance and hindrance of true knowledge. 'To break in upon the sanctuary of vanity and ignorance will be, I suppose, some service to human understanding; though so few are apt to think they deceive or are deceived in the use of words, or that the language of the sect they are of has any faults in it which ought to be examined or corrected, that I hope I shall be pardoned if I have in the Third Book dwelt long on this subject; and endeavoured to make it so plain that neither the inveterateness of the mischief, nor the prevalency of the fashion, shall be any excuse for those who will not take care about the meaning of their own words, and will not suffer the significancy of their expressions to be inquired into.'

'Locke's teaching in his other works,' says the authority above quoted, 'is influenced by what is taught in his "Essay." Thus his favourite idea of free toleration for the individual expression of religious belief—then a paradox, now a commonplace—is founded on the dependence of man's knowledge on experience, and on the unfitness of persecution as a means of introducing truth to a human mind; while his refusal of toleration to atheists is in harmony with that "mathematical certainty of God's existence" which he reports to be attainable by every man who uses his faculties enough. The same intellectual individualism pervades what he wrote about government, the education of the young, and the reasonableness of Christianity.'

'Locke's character is reflected in his works. In all that he wrote and did he is pre-eminently himself, in his caution and calculation with an approach to timidity, steady adherence to the concrete of experience, indifference to abstract speculation, suspicion of mystical enthusiasm, calm reasonableness, love for truth, and ready submission to facts even when they could not be reduced to system in a human understanding. His temperate aim was not to explain the universe, but to adapt his own intellectual life and that of others to the actual conditions. He sought to awaken the intellectual spirit, and to bring about an amendment of the operations of the understanding, more than to solve

the enigmas of existence. Hence the lasting educational value of his authorship.'

We turn from Locke, the man of science and learning, and Temple, the elegant and cultivated gentle-  
John Bunyan,  
1628-88.  
man, to a very different and incomparably greater writer in the author of 'The Pilgrim's Progress.' In the year of the Restoration John Bunyan was put into Bedford Gaol for breaking the law with regard to preaching. In his autobiography ('Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners'), written during his incarceration, he tells us of his early life, his youthful marriage, his 'conversion,' his spiritual struggles, and his mental and physical difficulties.

We see him to have been a man of almost no education, and utterly deficient in culture, knowledge, or any wide experience of the world. We find him from his earliest years struggling hard 'to realise his position among the immensities and infinities,' turning for guidance to the Bible and the two or three pious tracts which composed his whole library. His fervid imagination, his passionate emotions, while elevating his soul by making him see through material things to the spiritual within them, torment him with an almost morbid consciousness of his own worthlessness.

Three things in especial he had which, combined, go far to making great literature: an absolute, unswerving devotion to what he considered truth (a devotion such as of itself has penetrated less exalted writers with an earnestness that has given long life to their works); the power of so vividly presenting the essentials of a story (as in 'Grace Abounding,' 'Pilgrim's Progress,' 'The Holy War,' etc.) as to make the reader thoroughly interested in the narrative for its own sake; and finally, a style beautiful without apparent decoration, strong without evident effort, harmonious without seeming to attempt rhythmical effect, which would make it a delight to read Bunyan merely for its sake.

Southey, it is true, has declared Bunyan's style to be a 'homespun' one, whatever that may mean; but he has added that it is 'not a manufactured one,' and he further

calls it ‘natural.’ Coleridge says that ‘it (“Pilgrim’s Progress”) is composed in the lowest style of English without slang or false grammar. If you attempted to polish it, you would at once destroy the reality of the vision. For works of imagination should be written in very plain language.’ What is meant here by the word ‘lowest,’ or what the ‘highest’ (as opposed to it) would signify, is not, perhaps, very clear. That Bunyan uses simple language is true enough, but that surely is not to be reckoned a fault; but it is not the words which are used, but rather the way in which words are used, that constitutes style, whether in prose or verse.

Here are a few lines from ‘Grace Abounding,’ which will do as well as any others to illustrate Bunyan’s method:—

‘A tinkling cymbal is an instrument of music, with which a skilful player can make such melodious and heart-inflaming music that all who hear him play can scarcely hold from dancing; and yet, behold, the cymbal hath not life, neither comes the music from it, but because of the art of him that plays therewith; so then the instrument at last may come to nought and perish, though in times past such music hath been made upon it.’

The following short extract from ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ (Christian being now in the Valley of the Shadow) is a fine specimen of Bunyan’s narrative style:—

‘One thing I would not let slip: I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded that he did not know his own voice; and thus I perceived it. Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning Pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian more to it than anything that he met with before, even to think that he should now blaspheme Him that he loved so much before; yet could he have helped it he would not have done it; but he had not the discretion neither to stop his ears, nor to know from whence those blasphemies came.’

To the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’ which appeared in 1678, Bunyan wrote a sequel, which is known as the ‘Second Part of the Pilgrim’s Progress,’ and appeared in 1684; it narrates the adventures of Christian’s wife and children (still ‘delivered under the similitude of a dream’), and is generally held to be inferior to its forerunner.

In the interval Bunyan had published ‘The Life and Death of Mr. Badman’ (1680), which Mr. Gosse considers ‘to possess greater importance than “The Holy War.” It is [he says] absolutely original as an attempt at realistic fiction, and it leads through Defoe on to Fielding and the great school of English novels.’

‘The Holy War’ here alluded to appeared in 1682, the war being the siege of the demons before the city of Mansoul; it is a more ambitious work than the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’ to which it is usually considered inferior: if this opinion be the right one, it is probably to be justified on the ground that the earlier work is more full of human interest, and less obviously a work of imagination than the latter. The style of ‘The Holy War,’ however, is to the full as good as in the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress,’ while isolated passages might be selected from it which surpass anything to be found in the rest of Bunyan’s writings. Two criticisms of Macaulay’s are well worth reproducing:—

‘The few great works of imagination which appear in a critical age are, almost without exception, the works of uneducated men. Thus at a time when persons of quality translated French romances, and when the universities celebrated royal deaths in verses about tritons and fauns, a preaching tinker produced the “Pilgrim’s Progress.”’

‘Though there were many clever men in England during the latter half of the seventeenth century, there were only two minds which possessed the imaginative faculty in a very eminent degree. One of these minds produced the “Paradise Lost,” the other the “Pilgrim’s Progress.”’

We close this brief sketch of our prose literature in the latter part of the seventeenth century with a mere mention of the chief writers on subjects connected with religion. Among the Nonconformist writers Baxter continued to be the most prominent. His

Baxter. voluminous writings include, among his post-Restoration work, ‘The Reformed Liturgy,’ (P. 410.) ‘Now or Never,’ ‘A Paraphrase on the New Testament.’ For the last of these he was sentenced to eighteen months’ imprisonment (by Judge Jeffreys) for

sedition. Barclay and Penn were members of the Society of Friends, generally known as Quakers, of which community the founder was George Fox (1624-90), whose memorial is his 'Journal of his Life, Travels, and Sufferings,' published when these were all ended. Robert Barclay (1648-90), the chief theologian of the Quakers, was the author of several works of piety, including 'Truth cleared of Calumnies,' 'Universal Love considered upon its Right Foundation,' and 'An Apology for the True Christian Divinity.' William Penn (1644-1718), the founder of Pennsylvania, has left us a clearly-written 'Brief Account of . . . the People called Quakers,' as well as a devotional work, written in his early manhood, 'No Cross, no Crown.'

The Church of England clergymen who are found during this period as writers on theology are many. Of Isaac Barrow and of Samuel Parker we have already spoken. John Tillotson (1630-94), Archbishop of Canterbury, was the author of 'The Rule of Faith,' and several volumes of sermons. Edward Stillingfleet (1635-99), Bishop of Worcester, the patron of Bentley and opponent of Locke, wrote his 'Origines Sacrae' in 1662, and a large number of other theological treatises. Robert South (1633-1716), Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, who wrote 'The Laitie Instructed' in 1660, is famous for his wit. Dr. Ralph Cudworth's (1617-88) chief claim to remembrance is his 'True Intellectual System of the Universe,' a book which was meant to combat 'Hobbism and Scepticism'; the work was to have been completed in three parts, of which, however, only the first appeared. Cudworth, in combating free-thinking, treats his subject in such a liberal spirit as to lead many to accuse him of unorthodoxy. The English Dr. Thomas Burnet (1635-1715) and the Scotsman, Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), Bishop of Salisbury, may be mentioned. The former wrote 'The Sacred Theory of the Earth' (1684) and 'Philosophic Archaeology' (1692). In the latter he attempts to demonstrate the scientific truth of the Mosaic

account of the Creation by treating it as allegorical, Thomas Burnet and was, in consequence, suspected of a leaning towards scepticism. His English style (the first edition of both his books was in Latin) has been highly praised for its vigour and colour.

Bishop Burnet is best known for his 'History of My Own Times,' a posthumous work. This lively Gilbert Burnet. interesting book is still a standard authority for the history of the period, as, like Clarendon's History, it is written from first-hand knowledge. Burnet's egotism and self-complacency are bantered by Pope and Arbuthnot in their parody 'Memoirs of P. P., Clerk of the Parish.' Burnet did not dare to publish his history in his own lifetime, but left directions for it to be published six years after his death. It was not published till 1723, and raised a storm of obloquy from Tories and Jacobites. Burnet, Swift's 'Scotch dog,' is the Buzzard in Dryden's 'Hind and Panther.'

Some twenty years before another posthumous History had been published. This was written by a Earl of Clarendon, 1609-74. much more important figure in our history and our literature. This is Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon. Educated at Oxford, Hyde entered the Middle Temple on leaving college, lived among men of letters, and rose rapidly to importance in politics. Espousing the royalist side, he was knighted in 1643 and made Chancellor of the Exchequer; he went into exile with Charles, and was made Lord Chancellor on the Restoration. Shortly before this, his daughter was secretly married to James, Duke of York (James II.). In 1667, Clarendon fell a victim to court intrigues and his own unpopularity, was deprived of office, impeached of high treason, and sent into exile in France. There, seven years later, he died.

His literary monument is his 'History of the Rebellion,' first taken in hand in 1641 and published in 1702-4. This is supplemented by his 'Life . . . being a Continuation of the History of the Grand Rebellion,' etc., which was published in 1759. A series of essays, many State Papers, and various pamphlets are among his literary remains.

Clarendon's style is prolix, and has nothing of the new

clearness and terseness which were beginning to supplant the old involved, parenthetic, over-copious methods in his time ; he is generally vigorous, however, and often eloquent : there is something grand and spacious about his workmanship. In this respect he is the antithesis of the garrulous and lively Gilbert Burnet, whose style is infinitely more modern. The ‘History’ is largely an apologia, and therefore it is natural enough that proportion is not much observed in it, and that digressions abound. What has always recommended it in the eyes of all readers is the number of portraits of contemporaries with which it abounds, and the admirable skill with which these are drawn. Clarendon is believed to have derived hints for this from the various writers of ‘Characters.’

The following account of the fall of Strafford will give some idea of his style and method :—

‘Thus fell the greatest subject in power, and little inferior to any in fortune, that was at that time in either of the three kingdoms ; who could well remember the time when he led those people who then pursued him to his grave. He was a man of great parts and extraordinary endowments of nature, not unadorned with some addition of art and learning, though that again was more improved and illustrated by the other ; for he had a readiness of conception and sharpness of expression which made his learning thought more than in truth it was.

His first inclinations and addresses to the Court were only to establish his greatness in the country, where he apprehended some acts of power from the old Lord Saville, who had been his rival. always there, and of late had strengthened himself by being made a Privy Councillor and officer at Court : but his first attempts were so prosperous that he contented not himself with being secure from his power in the country, but rested not till he had bereaved him of all power and place in Court, and so sent him down, a most abject disconsolate old man, to his county, where he was to have the superintendency over him too, by getting himself at that time made Lord President of the North. These successes, applied to a nature too elate and arrogant of itself, and a quicker progress into the greatest employments and trusts, made him more transported with disdain of other men, and more contemning the forms of business, than haply he would have been if he had met with some interruptions in the beginning, and had passed in a more leisurely gradation to the office of a statesman.

He was, no doubt, of great observation and a piercing judgment, both unto things and persons ; but his too good skill in persons made him judge the worse of things : for it was his misfortune to be

of a time wherein very few wise men were equally employed with him, and scarce any (but the Lord Coventry, whose trust was more confined) whose faculties and abilities were equal to his : so that upon the matter he wholly relied upon himself, and, discerning many defects in most men, he too much neglected what they said or did. Of all his passions his pride was most predominant, which a moderate exercise of ill fortune might have corrected and reformed, and which was by the hand of Heaven strangely punished by bringing his destruction upon him by two things that he most despised, the people and Sir Harry Vane. In a word, the epitaph which Plutarch records that Sylla wrote for himself may not be unfitly applied to him ; that “no man did ever pass him either in doing good to his friends or in doing mischief to his enemies” ; for his acts of both kinds were most exemplar and notorious.’

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### GENERAL SURVEY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE.

WE have seen how in the preceding period what is called <sup>The Poetry.</sup> 'Classicism' had almost entirely won the victory over what is called 'Romanticism.' With <sup>—</sup> Pope, who is the commanding figure in the poetry of the first half of the eighteenth century, this victory is rendered more splendid, even while side by side with his triumphs signs of a revolt against his sway are soon to be discerned. We have used the metaphor 'victory,' which will serve our purpose so long as the reader does not strain the meaning too far. 'Romanticism' was defeated, held in check, but not dead, even during its darkest days, the first half of the eighteenth century. The ordeal was eventually good for poetry, as the spirit of romanticism is seen best in protest or in revolt. Poetry needs both elements—the classic as well as the romantic, the law of order as well as the law of liberty; and there are few if any poets of moment in whom both elements are not to be found mingled in some proportion. It is not straining matters if we assert that romantic elements are to be found in Pope (witness his 'Eloisa,' and many passages in other poems and in his Letters). Pope himself contributed to the 'Seasons,' and many of his followers were more or less romanticists swamped by a prevailing fashion.

There is no need, however, to enter into a discussion of Pope's works or influence now, as we have to treat his writings in some detail later on : it will suffice for us to say that in them we always find that his models in versification (and often in choice of subjects) are Dryden's, and that his sway over his contemporaries was almost unbounded. Pope's neatness, wit, and polish of diction were what charmed then and still charm, although they are not the charms which to-day we necessarily look for in verse.

But while the fame of the classic poetry was at its height, the way was being prepared for its overthrow, and for another revolution in poetry. Contemporary with Pope, Addison, and Prior, there is Thomson; and the century which has 'The Rape of the Lock' in its second decade, and in its fifth 'The Dunciad,' has in its third Thomson's 'Seasons' and in its last the 'Lyrical Ballads' of Coleridge and Wordsworth. We have then to endeavour to follow the direction of the stream of poetry as it flowed with many windings and bendings back from Sir Plume to the Ancient Mariner, from Pope who bids us

'Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,  
And catch the Manners living as they rise.'

to the same Pope who along with Thomson writes,

'For loveliness  
Needs not the foreign aid of ornament,  
But is when unadorn'd adorn'd the most :  
Thoughtless of beauty, she was beauty's self,  
Recluse amid the close-embowering woods.'<sup>1</sup>

then on to the poet who tells how he has 'learned to look on nature

'... hearing oftentimes  
The still sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue.'

(Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, 1798.)

Decay of the 'Classic' School. We talk sometimes of 'schools' of writers, and the phrase is not without its use, provided that we bear in mind that some particular qualities by which any member of a given school deserves his fame are often peculiar to him and not necessarily the common property of him and his 'co-pupils.' The poet Gray, writing in 1770, provides the following heading for a section of a history of poetry :—

Part V.—School of France introduced after the Restoration, Waller, Dryden, Addison, Prior, and Pope, *which has continued to our own times.*

<sup>1</sup> See 'The Seasons,' Autumn. The last two lines quoted are Pope's.

The discussion of the origin and the distinctive qualities of this 'school' belongs to the history of the preceding period; the peculiar merits which give to Dryden and to Pope places of high honour in our literature we have not to deal with in this chapter. The chief defects of this 'school'—its narrowness, its want of sympathy, its lack of interest in Nature, and its too close adherence to conventional rules—must be borne in mind here, since it is of importance for us to notice the causes that prepared its decay, at a time when new tendencies—new 'schools' in literature, if you will—were combining to give it its death-blow. For we shall find that there is no poet of any note—with the exception, perhaps, of Johnson—who can with any propriety be classed as belonging wholly to Pope's school. We may remark too that classification as a member of a 'school' is associated with talent rather than with genius.

From the chronological table prefixed to this volume we see that, while Pope is preparing to write 'The Anti-Classico' Dunciad,' Thomson is giving us our first Tendencies. great poem of natural description, and that in a metre (blank verse) as far removed from any kinship with Pope as it is in matter and manner, its main resemblance being merely in its diction—that artificial 'diction' of the first part of the eighteenth century which Johnson praised Pope for teaching us, which Wordsworth rejected and Matthew Arnold derided. Contemporary with these is Ramsay, who, though no great poet, yet proves by his pastoral 'The Gentle Shepherd' our point that romanticism may be found in an essentially classical poet; nor will the student pass too lightly over Dyer's delicate 'Grongar Hill,' with its exquisite landscape drawing and its sweet Descriptions of Nature. L'Allegro movement. This poem, too, published in the same year (1726) as Thomson's 'Winter,' must serve as a reminder that one of the chief elements of Wordsworth's poetry had found no mean exponents in the early part of the eighteenth century—'the age of prose and reason.'

Nor need we suppose that there was not a large public ready to appreciate it. 'It ["The Seasons"] was no

sooner read,' says a contemporary quoted by Wordsworth, 'than universally admired; those only excepted who had not been used to feel or to look for anything in poetry beyond a point of satirical or epigrammatic wit, a smart antithesis richly trimmed with rhyme with the softness of an elegiac complaint.'

We see thus that an audience is being prepared for poets of wider sympathies; let us therefore here sketch briefly the factors which combined to form the victorious Romanticism of the nineteenth century. First and foremost the ever widening popularity of the work of Pope and his school creates a thirst for poetry which the rills of classicism are not deep enough to slake. There is boredom even in the *salons*, a growing discontent against the feeling that the proper study of mankind is fashionable man. This feeling and the attendant social discontent will be a deepening mark of the eighteenth century in Europe, and will give us in France on the literary side the work of Jean Jacques Rousseau, which will herald on the social side the French Revolution. In England we shall have the escape from man to Nature, from the drawing-room, card-table, and society babblings to

'The silence that is in the starry sky,  
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.'

- There is a tendency in human nature when discontented to look back to real or fancied glories of the past. The second great factor of the literary upheaval was the discovery of the literary treasures of the past, the famous old ballads and romances, and the renewed study and love of the great masters of freedom in our literature—Shakespeare, Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton. It was the last two poets in particular who had the most immediate influence upon the beginnings of the movement. The influence of Chaucer and of Shakespeare upon our literature has never been wholly lost, but Spenser and Milton were for a time eclipsed by Dryden and Pope. Both of these, it will be remembered, 'translated' portions of Chaucer, and thus helped to keep

Factors in  
the earlier  
Romantic  
Revival.

this great master's name and fame alive: Shakespeare was read, loved, studied, imitated, and 'improved upon' all through the classical period.

Strangely enough it was Mat Prior who, in his 'Ode to the Queen' (1706), led the way in imitating Spenser. Bad even in form (according to Dr. Johnson it consisted chiefly of the use of 'I ween' and 'I weet') as the imitation is, its date makes it important as a link. The crowd of scribblers copied Prior and thought it was Spenser they were imitating. But it was the 'Aeglogues' of Spenser which inspired Ambrose Philips to write his 'Pastorals' (1709). Spenser's influence was enhanced by the new edition of his works edited by John Hughes and published in 1715. It is humorous to find the editor under the reign of the heroic couplet apologising for the *monotony* of the Spenserian stanza. But it will be noticed that all these early Spenserian and Miltonic imitations apologise for their existence by assuming to a greater or less degree the form of burlesque.

Thus John Philips burlesques Milton in his 'Splendid Shilling' (1705) and 'Cyder' (1706), and as his meed finds his name enshrined in Thomson's 'Autumn' thus:—

'The piercing cyder for the thirsty tongue,  
Thy native theme, and boon inspirer too,  
Philips, Pomona's bard, the second then  
Who nobly durst, in rhyme-unfetter'd verse,  
With British freedom sing the British song.'

This quotation attests the Nature-poet's debt to his humbler predecessor Philips as well as that to Milton, which needs no attestation.

The words 'rhyme-unfettered' show that not only in the matter but also in the form of verse the shackles of classicism were found irksome. A large amount of blank verse (and some of it good blank verse) belongs to the time when Pope's fame was at its height, e.g. Somerville's 'Chase' (1735), Glover's 'Leonidas' (1737), Young's 'Night Thoughts' (1742-4), Blair's 'Grave' (1743), Armstrong's 'Art of Preserving Health' (1744), Aken-side's 'Pleasures of Imagination' (1744), etc.

Other metres came into favour too; Shenstone, for instance, turns to the Spenserian stanza in his professedly

humorous 'Schoolmistress.' Shortly after the 'Schoolmistress' Thomson gives us a really great poem Return to Older Metres. in Spenser's stanza—'The Castle of Indolence' (1748)—which is also humorously archaic, and therefore an apologetic turning from eighteenth-century standards.

Before we reach this, however, the Odes of Collins and of Gray meet our eyes, and these seem to stand as far removed from the bulk of the verse of their age as it is possible for any writings to do; it is not our purpose to discuss their works here; we will merely point out that Collins brings back into English poetry a lyric spirit that had long been absent from it, while Gray, in his best poems, reached 'the style he aimed at,' as he tells us, viz. 'extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical.'

Milton's earlier poetry, especially his 'Il Penseroso,' appealed most to the men of this transition period 'The Churchyard School.' in poetry. Hence arose what has been called the 'Churchyard' School, which is represented by Blair's 'Grave' and Young's 'Night Thoughts' (both in blank verse), by Collins's 'Ode to Evening' (unrhymed lyric) and by Gray's 'Elegy.' These poets of gloom are of two categories: realists like Blair, who make use of all the paraphernalia of the tomb—the charnel-house, the skeleton, and so forth; and sentimentalists like Gray and Collins, who do not like to shock the feelings, but keep in their landscape a few tombstones and a moping owl or two.

Milton's influence on individual writers is most clearly seen in the work of the Warton brothers, of Collins, of Mason, and of Gray. An extract from Joseph Warton's 'Ode to Fancy' will enable the student to trace the resemblance for himself:—

‘Haste, Fancy, from the scenes of folly,  
To meet the matron melancholy;  
Goddess of the tearful eye,  
That loves to fold her arms and sigh;  
Let us with silent footsteps go  
To charnels and the house of woe.’

And they went to charnels with a vengeance.

Sad stuff this 'Goddess of the tearful eye' and the rest of it, you may say; but less insipid than the countless imitations of Pope by 'Persons of Quality' which were the fashion of the hour. It meant something in the re-nascence of our poetry that men should follow noble models such as Milton and Spenser, and relegate Pope to his proper position as a model for school exercises.

Thomas Warton's 'Ode to Summer,' with such lines as

'Haste thee, nymph, and hand in hand  
With thee lead a buxom band;  
Bring fantastic-footed Joy,  
With Sport, that yellow-tressed boy,'

and so forth, is a mere echo of Milton.

Collins is rarely a mere echo, as in his 'Play with the tangles of her hair' in the 'Ode to Liberty,' but his debt to Milton is apparent, especially in his love of personification. Gray, too, is influenced more in spirit than in tone, as might be illustrated from his 'Ode to Spring'; but his debt to Milton is enormous, for he borrows from the elder poet many a phrase and many a thought, and his diction is essentially Miltonic. His 'Elegy' was published in 1751, and when we read that 'poem of such high perfection and such universal appeal to the tenderest and the noblest depth of human feeling,'<sup>1</sup> we know that we have moved not so much to a great distance from Pope as into a province unknown to him.

It is not, however, to the greater poets alone that we should confine our attention here; let the student but glance at the names of some of the less valuable metrical productions (on pp. 528-531) written in the middle third of the century to see what a variety of new subjects the verse-makers were treating of then, into what new paths

<sup>Variety of</sup> they were trying to force Poetry, to what old <sup>Subjects.</sup> ones they were endeavouring to make her return; he will then not fail to see that many who had no patience with those servile imitators of Pope, who 'made poetry a mere mechanic art,' were seeking fresh roads for the muse.

<sup>1</sup> Swinburne.

Two<sup>1</sup> men we may mention, however, who may be considered Pope's genuine followers, and the chief Followers of the reaction—Johnson<sup>1</sup> and his antagonist, Churchill<sup>2</sup>: yet Johnson, having a certain dignity and stately earnestness which are all his own, is at the same time far more wordy and less elegant than his avowed master; while Churchill is at least as much indebted to Butler as to Pope, and is not, except by snatches, a pupil creditable to either.

Goldsmith, again, adheres to Pope's couplet, but he handles it in his own way; the pensive reflection, common to much later poetry, appears in his writings, and so, too, Sentimental Element. is a marked characteristic of our literature (but more especially of the prose literature) about this time. We observe that Goldsmith in his poetry is fond of descriptions (notably of foreign scenes) and of village life—the village life, however, of the pleasantly artificial kind, not without kinship with Shenstone's conventions, totally differing from the sternly gloomy realism of Crabbe, whose poetical work begins with the last quarter of the century.

By this time, however, the revolt against the 'classic' Romantic school had become definite and conscious; two 'Forgeries' or three occurrences after the middle of the century may serve to mark clearly the progress of that new romantic movement.

We have seen already the striving against convention shown in much of the literary work of the day; we see one remarkable sign of this in the reception afforded by men of taste to the sentimental effusions of James Macpherson, who claimed to be translating from an ancient Celtic poet 'Ossian.'<sup>3</sup> Macpherson's epics are prose rhapsodies in style, modelled upon the lyric parts of the Old Testament. The genuineness of his work is still in controversy, although unquestionably he was a Gaelic scholar and had

<sup>1</sup> 'London,' 1738, 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' 1749.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Rosciad,' 1761.

<sup>3</sup> Macpherson's first experiment, 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry,' appeared in 1760.

before him some genuine Gaelic fragments, from which he drew his original inspiration. The fact, however, remains that there was a new spirit in his work, and, false as much of the Celtic note was, yet his clever effusions were welcomed with enthusiasm and exercised a considerable influence both here and on the Continent. All this is a plain indication that the yoke of the 'correct' school was irksome.

A few years later a youth of genius, out of harmony with eighteenth-century ideals, conceived the unfortunate idea of passing off his poems as the work of a medieval English poet; Chatterton's deceptions were soon discovered, but they have more interest than is connected with the miserable life and tragic death of their author. From Chatterton, if we wish for a definite era, we may date the commencement of the new romantic poetry; his writings in form and spirit belong entirely to the new age, not only having as little in common with the preceding portion of the eighteenth as they have with the fifteenth century, to which he would have had us believe they belonged, but exercising a marked influence on his successors, notably on Coleridge.

Two works of research also mark strikingly the tendency of the time to look back lovingly to the earlier English poetry. While Chatterton was sending his poems to Horace Walpole, and Walpole was illustrating the zeal and ignorance of this craving after the medieval by successfully palming off his own 'Castle of Otranto' as a 'Gothic' romance (1764), Percy was preparing his edition of old English ballads, which he called 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry' (1765)—that book of which Wordsworth says: 'I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day<sup>1</sup> who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the Reliques.' Ten years after this (1774) appeared the first volume of Thomas Warton's 'History of English Poetry,' a book which, whatever defects it may have, shows a genuine love of our older literature, and a close acquaintance with it. It was

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<sup>1</sup> 1815 (in the appendix to the second edition of the 'Lyrical Ballads')

published at a time when readers were very much more willing to hear about the poets before Cowley—with whom the collection of poetry for which Johnson wrote ‘Lives’ begins—than they would have been a few years earlier. Few men did more to make the new movement successful than the brothers Warton, Thomas and James. Professor Phelps says of the latter that ‘perhaps he is the first *consciously* Romantic poet in the eighteenth century,’ and although he disagrees, as we disagree, with Court-hope’s dictum that Warton’s ‘Enthusiasts’ (1740) ‘may certainly be regarded as the starting-point of the revival,’ yet he adds truly ‘but Warton’s peculiar distinction is that he was a Romanticist with a programme.’

And now we may take it that what is known as ‘eighteenth-century poetry’ is finally done with, for of Darwin and Hayley and such poetasters we need take little notice, or none. But here, towards the end of our period, we meet with many great poets who belong to the new time; two of these, we will remember—Burns and Cowper—lived, wrote, and died in the eighteenth century, while others—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Landor—were then but beginning their activity.

Burns is in his poetry so entirely apart from his day that we reserve our remarks on his work till we deal with it subsequently; Cowper acknowledges Pope as his metrical master, yet differs widely from him even in the technical part of his art, while into the spirit of his best poems entered a love of nature animate and inanimate alike, a deep tenderness, a feeling of humanity, that hitherto had not been equalled; we say nothing of the curious mixture of cheerfulness and melancholy which distinguishes him from other poets.

Coleridge, Wordsworth, Landor must be dealt with more fully when we treat of the next century; yet let us note that Landor goes to the Greeks for his inspiration, and that Wordsworth and Coleridge’s joint production, the ‘Lyrical Ballads,’ sounds, though few realised it at once, the triumphant note of victory for the romantic banners, while on their work, as on Cowper’s and on Burns’s, we find the influence of one tremendous result of that other

revolt against conventions, of which we have already spoken, in the eighteenth century—the French Revolution.

On the drama during this period only one or two general remarks are necessary here. The separation Drama. between literature and the stage, which began before the Restoration, was growing gradually more and more complete. Between the death of Queen Anne and the end of the century there are no tragedies remarkable in our literature, nor any very striking comedies except those of Goldsmith and Sheridan. When the liking for comedies of the type made popular by Congreve, Wycherley, and Farquhar began to pall (owing perhaps to their no longer holding up the mirror to the life of the better classes), a taste was developed for a sweeter, more wholesome, if more mawkish, comedy (founded upon the 'Comedy of Manners'), which is called generally Sentimental Comedy. 'Sentiment' was the fashion of the day, and this is the foe both to coarseness and to virility: it marks usually the tastes of an age when women are being catered for or are themselves caterers. A good type of this Comedy of Sentiment is the 'Conscious Lovers' of that arrant sentimentalist Steele. Plenty of eighteenth-century plays are of this type, but none of them is of very high merit. In the best plays of the period—those of Goldsmith and Sheridan—the authors have modelled themselves closely upon the 'Restoration' comedy-writers.

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But, undoubtedly, the chief glory of eighteenth-century literature is in its prose, and in that particular Prose branch of prose most akin to poetry—fiction. We must remember that the beginning of the age is rendered notable by a large amount of fine essays in pamphlets and periodicals. This is the era of 'occasional' writings, and the time from which the modern magazine and newspaper date their first great days. We have Addison and Steele and Swift and Defoe devoting their energies to this work, besides many minor but notable writers. The tradition of the essay which appeared at regular intervals was nobly taken up and carried on by

Johnson and Goldsmith, and it still flourishes vigorously under altered forms.

The genesis of the novel itself is due partly to this <sup>Realistic</sup> 'occasional' writing, and is in a degree fortuitous; <sup>Narrative.</sup> Defoe's stories spring out of the columns of the newspaper, that great parent of fiction (where they endeavoured to pass themselves off as veracious accounts of real facts); Richardson's first idea is the moral guidance of the young person; Fielding makes his entry as a novelist by caricaturing Richardson. The eighteenth-century novel exemplifies the tendencies of the age, just as the eighteenth-century poetry does. Just as the 'correct' poetry was the result of the reaction against the flabby lawlessness of the later Stuart romanticists, so the plain, straightforward narratives of Defoe satisfied a taste that was sickened by the absurd pseudo-chivalrous romances, illegitimate descendants of Sidney's 'Arcadia,' which continued to be poured forth during the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century.

In Richardson, who devotes himself mainly to the <sup>Analytic</sup> analysis of character, the element of passion, <sup>Fiction.</sup> which becomes a strong factor in our literature a few years later, shows itself. Fielding, with more deliberately artistic aim, shows plainly enough the position that he considered this young form of literature ought to occupy, when he talks of the 'comic epic poem in prose.' When we turn from Smollett to Sterne, we feel, on the one hand, how important a part the sentiment, the tenderness—sometimes real, sometimes affected—such as we find in the latter must needs play in acting as a set-off to the brutal and barbarous coarseness of the former; on the other hand, we feel how a degraded and prurient sentimentality can descend lower than any coarseness. The great women writers soon about to spring up will bring humour and common-sense to the rescue of sentiment.

This turning consciously to the softer side of things is <sup>Sentimentality</sup> not without intimate connection with the <sup>and Sensibility.</sup> worship—or would-be worship—of nature, which we have seen in the poets of the day. It is part of the

revolt against the pseudo-classic fetters, and appears, as we have seen, in the poetry of Thomson long before Rousseau, whose '*Nouvelle Héloïse*' (1760) marks a period in a movement which had its origin in an attempt to throw off one kind of artificiality and one set of conventions, heedless of its bondage to another set at least as unnatural. Goldsmith, in his '*Vicar of Wakefield*' (1766), as in much of his verse and prose, exhibits the tendency in its sweetest and most pleasing form; Mackenzie, in his '*Man of Feeling*,' brings it to the lowest depths of degradation shortly before Goethe—at that time much influenced by English writers—gives the world, in 1774, the classic of weak-minded sentimentality in '*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*'.

From Smollett to the end of the century no novels of <sup>Minor Novelists.</sup> the first rank come before us, but it is interesting to note how the number of works of fiction rapidly multiplies—as if novel-writing, as a branch of literary art, was to replace the decayed drama—and how every element we have noted in the poetry comes before us in the prose. In multifarious ways, as we shall see, the story-writers are seeking new paths,—some trying, like Walpole and Clara Reeve, to reconstruct the romantic past; some, like Beckford, taking us to foreign climes and scenes; some, like Frances Burney, giving us pictures of contemporary English life.

Besides the novelists, there are great names in the <sup>Other Prose Writers.</sup> eighteenth century in nearly all departments of prose-writing. It will suffice here to point out that some of our chief works in theology, political philosophy, history, and criticism belong to the period we are now to study in more detail, and that among the chief writers thereof are Bolingbroke, Butler, Hume, Johnson, Gibbon, Burke, Adam Smith, and Reid.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS—FROM POPE TO GRAY.

POPE was the son of a tradesman who had retired from business with a competence. He was brought up as a Roman Catholic, and remained in that faith through life. His turn for versification showed itself very early, and was encouraged by his father. At the age of eight he made some verse translations from the classics, and much of his work of this nature belongs to his boyhood. There is a story that Pope (at the age of twelve or less) once saw Dryden sitting on his literary throne at Wills's coffee-house. Whether this be true or not, it is certain that Pope was early familiar with the work of Dryden, whose style he imitated and modelled his own versification and satires upon, and whom he praises unboundedly, as in the 'Essay on Criticism.' Dryden's 'Fables' set Pope also upon some imitations of Chaucer ('January and May,' 'The Wife of Bath,' 'The Temple of Fame'), which were published in 1709 and after. We need not discuss the early translations and imitations, which included, besides those above mentioned, adaptations from Ovid and Statius, and imitations (done in boyhood) of Spenser, Waller, Cowley, Rochester, Dorset, and Swift, with whose works he must have been closely acquainted at an early age. But the work done by the year 1714, including the Pastorals, the 'Essay on Criticism,' 'The Messiah,' and 'The Rape of the Lock,' may be conveniently dealt with now.

The Pastorals appeared in one of 'Tonson's Miscellanies' in 1709, but they had been written some years earlier, when the poet was between sixteen and seventeen. They are four eclogues ('Spring,' 'Summer,'

'Autumn,' 'Winter') in imitation of Vergil, and are perhaps as good as that kind of artificial, mock arcadian-rustic style of composition can be; but the taste for this particular sort of metrical effusion has gone by. It is unnecessary to point out that the verse is (like even the earliest of Pope's) scrupulously "correct" and well constructed. It may be noted here that the second and third are dedicated to Garth and Wycherly respectively, who had been among the first to encourage Pope to publish. In the same volume as Pope's *Pastorals* appeared another set of *Pastorals* by Ambrose Philips. Pope subsequently attacked them in Addison's paper, 'The Guardian,' under the form of an impartial comparison between his own and Philips' style, in which, 'with an unexampled and unequalled artifice of irony,' says Johnson, 'though he has himself always the advantage, he gives the preference to Philips.' This seems to have been about the time when the breach between Addison and Pope first opened, while the friendship between the latter and Gay was closely cemented.

'Windsor Forest' (written in 1704, and 1713) is a descriptive poem of over four hundred lines, <sup>Windsor Forest.</sup> after the manner of Denham's 'Cooper's Hill.' The remarks on the *Pastorals* to a great extent apply to this as well. It is the last of Pope's ventures in this description of writing. The reader may compare this specimen (from the latter part) with the passage already quoted (Vol. I., p. 365) from Denham's poem:—

'Hail, sacred peace! hail, long-expected days,  
That Thames's glory to the stars shall raise!  
Though Tiber's streams immortal Rome behold,  
Though foaming Hermus swells with tides of gold,  
From heav'n itself tho' sev'n-fold Nilus flows,  
And harvests on a hundred realms bestows;  
These now no more shall be the Muses' themes,  
Lost in my fame as in the sea their streams.'

The 'Messiah' appeared in the 'Spectator,' 1712; it is suggested by, rather than imitated from, Vergil's 'Pollio'; to our thinking it reminds one of Addison rather than of Vergil, and does not even faintly

recall the passages of Isaiah on which it is avowedly based. A very favourable specimen of the hundred and eight lines of the poem is this :—

‘ As the good shepherd tends his fleecy care,  
Seeks freshest pasture and the purest air,  
Explores the lost, the wand’ring sheep directe,  
By day o’ersees them and by night protects,  
The tender lamb he raises in his arms,  
Feeds from his hands and from his bosom warms ;  
Thus shall mankind his guardian cares engage,  
The promised father of the future age.’

We now come to the first of Pope’s longer works, the ‘Essay on Criticism,’ which, though written in 1709, did not appear till 1711. This, the first real evidence of Pope’s great qualities, we now give a brief account of. It belongs to the same kind of poetry as Roscommon’s ‘Essay on Translated Verse’ (see p. 459), to which, however, it is far superior. The poet divided it into three sections, which may be summarised as dealing with (*a*) the need of studying the principles of taste, the necessity for relying on Nature not alone, but improving our judgment by art, *i.e.* by studying the ancients and reverencing them; (*b*) the causes that hinder our judging correctly, *e.g.* the habit of looking at a part separate from the whole: ‘Some to conceits alone their taste confine’—‘Others for language all their care express,’

‘ But most by numbers judge a poet’s song,  
And smooth or rough, with them is right or wrong :  
In the bright Muse though thousand charms conspire,  
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire ;  
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,  
Not mend their minds ; as some to church repair,  
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.  
These equal syllables alone require,  
Though oft the ear the open vowels tire ;  
While expletives their feeble aid do join,  
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line ;  
While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,  
With sure returns of still expected rhymes ;  
Where’er you find “ The cooling western breeze,”  
In the next line it “ whispers through the trees.”  
If crystal streams “ with pleasing murmurs creep,”  
The reader’s threatened (not in vain) with “ sleep.” ’

Then at the last and only couplet fraught  
 With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,  
 A needless Alexandrine ends the song,  
 That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.’

In these lines Pope shows, exemplifies, and ridicules the chief faults of the unpoetical writers and critics of ‘correct’ poetry. The section concludes with the depreciation of party-spirit, prejudice, and envy in forming our judgments, and some lines on the state of poetry at the Restoration—

‘When love was all an easy monarch’s care,  
 Seldom at council, never in a war:  
 Jilts ruled the state, and statesmen farces writ—  
 Nay, wits had pensions, and young lords had wit,’ etc.—

which it may amuse the reader to compare with the extract from Dryden’s ‘Threnodia Augustalis.’ (c) The concluding section deals with the functions of the critic, and the way in which he should discharge them. It includes an attack on the bitter critic Dennis and some lines on the

‘Book-full blockhead, ignorantly read,  
 With loads of learned lumber in his head, . . .  
 All books he reads, and all he reads assails,  
 From Dryden’s Fables down to D’Urfey’s Tales.’

He ends with a laudation of Quintilian and Longinus, of Erasmus, Vida, and of Boileau (who ‘still in right of Horace sways’), of Mulgrave and Roscommon.

‘The Rape of the Lock’ is a mock heroic poem, describing with admirable gravity and raillery the incidents connected with

‘What dire offence from am’rous causes springs,  
 What mighty contests rise from trivial things.’

The ‘dire offence’ is the ‘rape’ of a ‘lock’ of Belinda’s (Miss Fermor’s) hair by ‘a well-bred lord’ (Lord Petre). The poem appeared first in two cantos in 1712, but was enlarged and republished in 1714, when the nymphs and sprites were introduced into it. The delicately-satirical mock-seriousness of a short epic which turns round a subject so exceedingly trivial is its most notable feature.

Thus, this is part of the speech of Belinda's protecting sylph on the morning of the rape:—

‘This day black omens threat the brightest fair  
That e'er deserved a watchful spirit's care ;  
Some dire disaster, or by force or sleight ;  
But what or where, the fates have wrapt in night.  
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,  
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw,  
Or stain her honour—or her new brocade—  
Forget her prayers—or miss a masquerade—  
Or lose her heart (or necklace) at a ball :  
Or whether Heaven has doomed that Shock must fall.’

‘The Rape of the Lock’ is a dainty little gem and Pope's most perfect piece. It is the epic of the reign of Queen Anne, the only epic possible for that ‘age of reason,’ when, as always in such ages, unreason reigns in the most important regions of life. Its faults are the faults of the age and are in evidence in our brief quotation, not least among them being a brutal cynicism as to the honour of women and as to all things lovely and of good report. The coarseness of the age is mirrored in the literature, in Swift, Pope, and Fielding.

In the year in which the enlarged edition of ‘The Rape of the Lock’ was published, Pope was diligently at work over the beginning of his version of <sup>Pope's</sup> <sub>Late Work and Life.</sub> Homer, which was to bring him great fame at the time, and money enough to secure him a competence for life. His smouldering wrath against Addison had been gradually drawing him away from the Whig dictator's circle, while his intercourse with Swift, Arbuthnot, Bolingbroke, and others of the opposite camp was made the closer by the foundation of the ‘Martin Scribblerus’ Club, which began to meet in the year 1713, and with which Swift's ‘Gulliver’ and Pope's ‘Dunciad,’ as well as many smaller works, are connected.

In 1717 Pope published his ‘Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard.’ In the same year his father died, and in the year following the poet took up his residence with his mother at Twickenham. There he worked hard at Homer—which, when completed, brought him in altogether some £8,000—and amused himself by constructing his famous grotto.

In 1725 he published an edition of Shakespeare, 'which drew down upon him the strictures of Theobald. Theobald received his punishment in 'The Dunciad,' which appeared in its first form in 1728.

Then followed the various 'Moral Essays' between 1731 and 1735. In the latter year the 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' was published; and next came the 'Imitations of Horace,' and then 'The Dunciad' in its final form; this was in 1743, the year before Pope's death.

Pope's translation of Homer began with versions of some passages from the 'Odyssey,' which appeared in 'Lintot's Miscellany' (1714); next year he published (by subscription) the first four books of the 'Iliad,' completing the work by 1720. About two years later he set to work on the 'Odyssey' (with Fenton and Broome as coadjutors), and this was finished in 1725. The success of the translation was very great; it was looked upon by Pope's contemporaries as the finest poetical achievement of the time, and long after Pope's death the same opinion was held of it. The judgment of our day, if not so enthusiastic as that of Dr. Johnson, which declares it to be 'the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen,' is yet willing to allow it considerable merits. It is at times vigorous, it is not lacking in dignity, and the diction, in spite of all that has been urged against it, is at least appropriate to the heroic couplet. Two faults, however, all must recognise in it: the first—that Pope's scholarship was imperfect—is a comparatively small one; the other—his failure to leave the atmosphere of the eighteenth century—is necessarily fatal to the claims of the work to rank as a great *translation*. Yet it is to one who knows no Greek a great poem.

'The Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard' is more emotional and fervid than anything else Pope has written. It is based on the well-known story of the lovers 'Eloisa and Abelard.' who, 'after a long course of calamities, retired each to a several convent and consecrated the remainder of their days to religion.' A letter of Abelard's, written to a friend, falls into Eloisa's hands and re-awakens all her former love. In the concluding portion of the poem, the

nun imagines herself resting on a tomb, ‘the neighbour of the dead,’ called at last from her narrow cell:—

‘In each low wind methinks a Spirit calls,  
And more than echoes talk along the walls.  
Here as I watch’d the dying lamps around,  
From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound.  
“Come, sister, come! (it said, or seem’d to say)  
Thy place is here, sad sister, come away.  
Once, like thyself, I trembled, wept and pray’d,  
Love’s victim then, tho’ now a sainted maid :  
But all is calm in this eternal sleep ;  
Here grief forgets to groan, and love to weep,  
Ev’n superstition loses ev’ry fear :  
For God, not man, absolves our frailties here.”’

This short poem is remarkable as one of the few in which Pope handles, and with success, passion and despair.

Of the ‘Moral Essays,’ the most famous are the four epistles which make up the ‘Essay on Man.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>‘Essay on Man.’</sup> This is dedicated to Bolingbroke, whom he addresses as his ‘guide, philosopher, and friend.’

The first epistle, after a statement that it is the intention of the writer to

‘Eye Nature’s walks, shoot Folly as it flies,  
And catch the Manners living as they rise,  
Laugh where we must, be candid where we can ;  
But vindicate the ways of God to Man’

(which last line is Milton’s, with the substitution of ‘vindicate’ for ‘justify’), deals with ‘the nature and state of man with respect to the universe.’ Man, the poet upholds, is not an imperfect being, but his happiness in the present depends partly upon his ignorance of the future, and partly upon his hope of a happier state. The cause of most of his misery is pride, which blinds him to his limitations:—

‘In Pride, in reas’ning Pride, our error lies ;  
All quit their sphere and rush into the skies.  
Pride still is aiming at their blest abodes,  
Men would be Angels, Angels would be Gods.  
Aspiring to be Gods, if Angels fell,

<sup>1</sup> Besides the ‘Essay on Man,’ there are five other epistles known as ‘Moral Essays.’ These are respectively the ‘Characters of Men,’ the ‘Characters of Women,’ ‘Of the Use of Riches,’ ‘Of Taste,’ and a letter to Addison (written in 1715), ‘occasioned by his dialogue on Medals.’

Aspiring to be Angels, Men rebel :  
 And who but wishes to invert the laws  
 Of Order, sins against th’ Eternal Cause.’

The poet points out the folly of man’s imagining himself the final cause of creation, the unreasonableness of his complaints against Providence for not making him perfect, and he endeavours to show that throughout the whole universe,

‘Far as Creation’s ample range extends,  
 The scale of sensual, mental pow’rs ascends,’

from the mole and the grovelling swine to the ‘half-reas’ning elephant,’ and finally to ‘man’s imperial race.’

If one link were broken in the chain that connects the lowest of creatures with man, and man through ‘natures ethereal, angel,’ etc., with God, the whole scheme of creation would be ruined. Hence we are to see the impiety of any one portion of creation aspiring to be above its responsibilities and mourning

‘the tasks or pains  
 The great directing Mind of All ordains.’

The epistle closes with the following plain statement of the writer’s standpoint, that of philosophic optimism :—

‘Cease then, nor Order Imperfection name,—  
 Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.  
 Know thy own point: this kind, this due degree  
 Of blindness, weakness, Heav’n bestows on thee.  
 Submit—in this, or any other sphere,  
 Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear:  
 Safe in the hand of one disposing Pow’r,  
 Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.  
 All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;  
 All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;  
 All Discord, Harmony, not understood;  
 All partial Evil, universal Good!  
 And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason’s spite,  
 One truth is clear, *Whatever is, is right.*’

In the succeeding epistles in the ‘Essay on Man’ Pope elaborates his (or rather Bolingbroke’s) system of philosophy; he discusses (Epistle ii.) ‘Man as an Individual,’ bidding each

‘Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;  
 The proper study of mankind is Man,’

and analyses the evil passions, and shows how even they are part of the scheme of the All-wise for the benefit of the universe. He proceeds to deal with man in his relation to society, and treats in his concluding epistle of the essentials of man's happiness :—

' Honour and shame from no Condition rise ;  
 Act well your part, there all the honour lies.  
 Fortune in Men has some small diff'rence made,  
 One flaunts in rags, one flutters in brocade ;  
 The cobbler apron'd, and the parson gown'd,  
 The friar hooded, and the monarch crown'd.  
 " What differ more " (you cry), " than crown and cowl ? "  
 I'll tell you, friend, a wise man and a fool.  
 You'll find if once the monarch acts the monk,  
 Or, cobbler-like, the parson will be drunk,  
 Worth makes the man, and want of it, the fellow ;  
 The rest is all but leather or prunella.'

A sort of pendant to the 'Essay on Man' is the beautiful 'Universal Prayer' which (according to Warburton<sup>1</sup>) was composed by Pope to show that his system, which, as put forward in the 'Essay,' had been suspected of a tendency towards fatalism, was, in reality, 'founded in free-will and terminated in piety.' The first three stanzas —this is one of the few poems in which Pope does not use the heroic couplet—are as follows :—

' Father of All ! in ev'ry Age,  
 In ev'ry Clime ador'd  
 By Saint, by Savage, and by Sage,  
 Jehovah, Jove, or Lord !  
 Thou Great First Cause, least understood :  
 Who all my sense confin'd  
 To know but this, that Thou art Good,  
 And that myself am blind ;  
 Yet gave me, in this dark Estate,  
 To see the Good from Ill ;  
 And binding Nature fast in Fate,  
 Left free the Human Will.'

Over the rest of the 'Moral Essays,' full as they are of witty epigrams and of bitingly satirical traits, we cannot linger; nor may we devote much space to the capital 'Imitations of Horace's Satires and Epistles' (1733-37),

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<sup>1</sup> See note on p. 614.

which many are inclined to think (with Mark Pattison) 'the most original of Pope's writings, and the most natural and spontaneous outcome of his genius.' From the 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' prefixed to them we quote the portrait of Addison, which, though not published till now (1737), had been written many years earlier:—

'Peace to all such ! but were there one whose fires  
 True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires ;  
 Blest with each talent and each art to please,  
 And born to write, converse and live with ease :  
 Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,  
 Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne ;  
 View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,  
 And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise ;  
 Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,  
 And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer ;  
 Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,  
 Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike ;  
 Alike reserved to blame, or to command,  
 A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend ;  
 Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieg'd,  
 And so obliging that he ne'er obliged ;  
 [Who, if two wits on rival themes contest,  
 Approves of each, but likes the worst the best ;]<sup>1</sup>  
 Like Cato, give his little Senate laws,  
 And sit attentive to his own applause ;  
 While Wits and Templars ev'ry sentence raise,  
 And wonder with a foolish face of praise—  
 Who but must laugh, if such a man there be ?  
 Who would not weep, if Atticus were he ?'

In the 'Epistle to Arbuthnot' the poet gives a sketch 'The Dunciad.' of his own career, of the way he is beset with scribblers of all kinds, and attacked in 'person, morals, and family' by the numerous enemies he had made. Many of these had already found a place in the three books of 'The Dunciad' published in 1728, and many more were admitted in 1742, when Pope added a fourth book to the poem. 'The Dunciad' is a long satire in the form of an epic, directed against human thick-headedness in general and against Pope's personal foes in

<sup>1</sup> These lines, not inserted in the published version, but restored from Pope's MS., doubtless allude to the head and front of Addison's offending—his praise of Tickell's translation of the first book of the 'Iliad.'

particular. Its relation to Dryden's 'MacFlecknoe' is obvious at once, but Pope's poem is aimed at more than merely one wretched rhymester.

'Herein,' says Professor Ward, 'is the justification of Pope's satire. It has frequently been argued that in the "Dunciad" he employs his satirical powers, intensified to their utmost degree, against objects undeserving of so serious an attack. He goes back, says a brilliant critic (M. Taine), to the time of the Deluge, he indulges in far-fetched historical tirades, he describes at length the reign of Dulness, past, present, and future, . . . and the gradual spread and continuing encroachments of the reign of Insipidity in his own land—and for what end? To crush a petty insect like Dennis, whose day, like that of all *ephemerae*, would have come to an end soon enough in any case, or a plodding antiquary like Theobald, or a trumpery fribble like Cibber, or many others less noteworthy, and therefore less worthy of public exposure than even these.'

'The answer to such reproaches seems clear. Where Pope mixed up personal spleen, personal resentment for affronts real or imagined, with the execution of his self-imposed duty of literary censor, he erred, and his error has avenged itself upon him severely enough. But Dulness was an enemy worthy of his steel. She is the natural foe of the true literary mind, and the true literary mind was typified in Pope more strongly than, perhaps, in any other author.'

In Pope's poem all the folk of Grub Street—and many who were not of it, but had incurred the irritable poet's resentment—find a niche. A short specimen only must suffice here; this extract describes part of the games (the diving contest for party scribblers) instituted by the Goddess (Dulness) in honour of the proclamation of Cibber as King:—

‘This labour past, by Bridewell all descend,  
(As morning prayer and flagellation end)  
To where Fleet-ditch with disemboguing streams  
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,  
The king of dykes! than whom no sluice of mud  
With deeper sable blots the silver flood.

"Here strip, my children ! here at once leap in,  
 Here prove who best can dash thro' thick and thin,  
 And who the most in love of dirt exel,  
 Or dark dexterity of groping well.  
 Who flings most filth and wide pollutes around  
 The stream, be his the Weekly Journals bound ;  
 A pig of lead to him who dives the best ;  
 A peck of coals a-piece shall glad the rest."

In naked majesty Oldmixon stands,  
 And Dido-like surveys his arms and hands ;  
 Then sighing, thus, "And am I now three-score ?  
 Ah, why, ye gods, should two and two make four ?"

He said, and climbed a stranded lighter's height,  
 Shot to the black abyss, and plunged downright.  
 The Senior's judgment all the crowd admire,  
 Who but to sink the deeper rose the higher.'

When we consider the bulk and quality of Pope's work,  
 Critical more especially if we just rise from reading  
 Remarks upon 'The Rape of the Lock' or the 'Epistle to  
 Pope

Dr. Arbuthnot,' with their perfect finish, their  
 'splendid diction,' their polished sarcasm, and their keen  
 insight into certain aspects of life, we feel almost tempted  
 to say with Johnson, 'After all this, it is surely super-  
 fluous to answer the question that has once been asked,  
 whether Pope was a poet, otherwise than by asking in  
 return, If Pope be not poet, where is poetry to be found ?'

Nowadays many—perhaps the majority—would answer  
 the question at once with a decided negative, and many  
 others would give him a very low place among the poets.  
 It is admitted on all sides that he is a superlatively  
 dexterous versifier, that he is always clever, and at his  
 best exceedingly vigorous ; but, on the other hand, we are  
 told that he 'does not take us much below the surface of  
 things, and does not give us the emotion of seeing things  
 in their truth and beauty.'

Yet, again, it may be urged that if indeed he lacks  
 what we are accustomed to look for in the poets—'in-  
 spiration, lofty sentiment, the heroic soul, chivalrous  
 devotion, the inner eye of faith, etc.'—he at least chose  
 subjects which he could treat without the possession of  
 these qualities.

'As truly as Shakespeare is the poet of man as God

made him, dealing with great passions and minute motives,' says Lowell, 'so truly is Pope the poet of society, the delineator of manners, the exposer of those motives which may be called acquired, whose spring is in institutions and habits of pure worldly origin. In his own province he still stands unapproachably alone. If to be the greatest satirist of individual men, rather than of human nature; if to be the highest expression which the life of the court and the ball-room has ever found in verse; if to have added more phrases to our language than any other but Shakespeare; if to have charmed four generations can make a man a great poet—then he is one. He was the chief founder of an artificial style of writing, which in his hands was living and powerful, because he used it to express artificial modes of thinking, and an artificial state of society.'

The 'artificial' mode of writing culminated in Pope, for, as we have said, and as we now shall see, he had no 'school' worthy of the name, although many rhymesters learned, more or less thoroughly, his tricks of style and many employed his metre and his artifices. Some poets learned much from him as to the technical handling of verse and the use of appropriate words, while the whole course of poetry since his time is indebted to him for that clearness and precision, that care and endeavour to prune exuberance with an unsparing hand, of which he is so conspicuous an example.

It seems natural to turn from the strict classicism of James Thomson,<sup>1</sup> to the work of the man who was the first to sound a clear and unmistakeable call to escape from the narrow fetters within which it was bound. This was James Thomson, whose first con-

<sup>1</sup> Thomson's uneventful life may be summed up in a sentence or two. He was the son of a Roxburghshire minister, who designed him for the Church. After finishing his education at Edinburgh University, he came to London, and was a private tutor at the time when he was engaged on 'The Seasons' (1726). He travelled on the Continent with another pupil, whose father (Lord Chancellor Talbot) subsequently obtained for him a small Government appointment. This he lost on Talbot's death in 1737, but received a sinecure governorship of the Leeward Islands some seven years later. He died in 1748, having been the friend of many of the chief literary men of his day. Collins' ode on his death, beginning 'In yonder grave a Druid lies,' is the best fruit of one of these friendships.

siderable poem, ‘Winter,’ appeared in 1726; in it he struck at once the note which distinguishes him from most of his contemporaries, and which makes the work remarkable, apart from its considerable poetic merits. The acquaintance with Nature herself, and not with mere conventional descriptions of nature, finds a place once more in our literature, and a larger one than it had hitherto ever held.

‘Excepting the “Nocturnal Reverie” of Lady Winchelsea, and a passage or two in the “Windsor Forest” of Pope,’ says Wordsworth, ‘the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the “Paradise Lost” of Milton, and the “Seasons,” does not contain a single new image of external nature, and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the poet had been steadily fixed upon the object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination.’ To Thomson, then, this, among other praises, must certainly be given; to him we must trace that love of external nature and of the careful observation thereof which finds so large a place in our later poetry, and which had become, indeed, one of the special characteristics or elements of English poetry even before the full revival of romanticism in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

‘The Seasons’ was finished in 1730<sup>1</sup>; it is written in blank verse, of which the following is a fair specimen—it is part of the description of the autumn storm that, ‘defeating oft the labours of the year,’ devastates the harvest crops:—

‘Exposed and naked to its utmost rage,  
Through all the sea of harvest rolling round,  
The billowy plain floats wide; nor can evade,  
Though pliant to the blast, its seizing force—  
Or whirled in air, or into vacant chaff  
Shook waste. And sometimes, too, a burst of rain,  
Swept from the black horizon, broad, descends  
In one continuous flood. Still over head  
The mingling tempest weaves its gloom, and still  
The deluge deepens, till the fields around  
Lie sunk and flattened in the sordid wave.

<sup>1</sup> Winter, 1726; Summer, 1727; Spring, 1728; Autumn, 1730.

Sudden, the ditches swell ; the meadows swim.  
 Red, from the hill, innumerable streams  
 Tumultuous roar, and high above its bank  
 The river lift ; before whose rushing tide  
 Herds, flocks, and harvests, cottages, and swains,  
 Roll mingled down—all that the winds had spared,  
 In one wild moment ruined.'

Thomson's blank verse is, as Johnson points out, peculiarly his own : ' His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton or of any other poet than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of Cowley. His numbers, his pauses, his diction are of his own growth, without transcription, without imitation.' As regards his diction, however, he is often charged with the use of cumbrous Latinisms in his endeavours to be stately ; but it is doubtful whether in this respect he does more than use the conventional poetic language of the day.

Thomson's other most important work is 'The Castle of Indolence' (1746), an allegorical poem written in the Spenserian stanza, which has somewhat the same sort of

*'The Castle of Indolence.'* relation to the romantic element in the later poetry of the century, as 'The Seasons' has to what is known as naturalism. The poem is in two cantos, the first dealing with the delights of the Castle, the second with the feats of 'the Knights of Art and Industry.' The language of the poem is meant to be archaic, and the writer endeavours to use simple words as far as possible. Here are a couple of stanzas from the opening part, describing the Castle :—

' Full in the passage of the vale above,  
 A sable, silent, solemn forest stood,  
 Where nought but shadowy forms was seen to move,  
 As Idlesse fancied in her dreaming mood ;  
 And up the hills, on either side, a wood  
 Of blackening pines, aye waving to and fro,  
 Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood ;  
 And where this valley winded out below,  
 The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard, to flow.

A pleasing land of drowsyheide it was,  
 Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye ;  
 And of gay castles in the clouds that pass  
 For ever flushing round a summer sky :

There eke the soft delights, that witchingly  
 Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,  
 And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh ;  
 But whate'er smacked of noyance or unrest  
 Was far, far off expelled from this delicious nest.'

Having considered the works of the two chief poets of the first half of the eighteenth century, and seen the different provinces of art each of these great but limited writers took for his own, we may profitably glance at some of the lesser writers of the time before turning to the study of the work of Collins and Gray, with which we conclude this chapter.

Addison is much more important to us as prose-writer than poet; yet, as the latter, he was honoured in his own generation, and is looked upon by some competent critics as forming a connecting link in point of style between Dryden (to whose sovereignty in the world of letters he in a measure succeeded) and Pope. His verse is correct, even, and frigid; his style of handling his subject wearisome, and his creative power *nil*. His 'Account of the Principal English Poets' is after the fashion of Roscommon and Mulgrave; his 'Letter from Italy' calls for no particular notice, and the poem on the 'Campaign' made his fortune more from its value to the Whig party than from any merits of its own. The best example of his verse is the famous simile from the 'Campaign' which depicts Marlborough as the Almighty's avenging angel, who

'Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.'

His tragedy of 'Cato' (1713) may be mentioned here. It contains striking passages and many striking lines, e.g. :—

'Tis not in mortals to command success ;  
 But we'll do more, Sempronius—we'll deserve it.'  
 'The woman that deliberates is lost.'  
 'The great, the important day, big with the fate  
 Of Cato and of Rome.'  
 'It must be so—Plato, thou reasonest well !  
 Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,  
 This longing after immortality ?  
 Or whence this secret dread and inward horror  
 Of falling into naught ?'

but it suffers from a defect fatal in a stage-play—dulness. Its initial success was due undoubtedly to political circumstances.

Garth is chronologically Dryden's successor in the use of the heroic couplet, and may, perhaps, be regarded as connecting Dryden's versification with Addison's and so with Pope's. His chief works are 'The Dispensary' (1699) and 'Claremont' (1715). The former is a mock heroic poem on the subject of the opposition of certain doctors to the resolution of the College of Physicians enjoining them to give free medical aid to the poor. 'Claremont' is a topographical, descriptive poem of the 'Cooper's Hill' species.

Prior's first notable work in literature was a caricature of Dryden's 'Hind and Panther,' which he wrote in conjunction with Montague. This was called 'The Country Mouse and the City Mouse.' His enduring fame, however, does not rest on this amusing 'skit,' or on his more ambitious works, 'Solomon,' the 'Carmen Seculare,' 'Alma,' etc.: he is valued for his graceful society verse, his delicate songs, and his epigrams. He published two volumes of collected poems—one in 1709, the other in 1718. Perhaps the prettiest example of his polished wit and felicitous ease of expression is his letter 'To a Child of Quality Four Years Old.' We quote it in its entirety:—

Lords, knights, and squires, the numerous band  
That wear the fair Miss Mary's fetters,  
Were summoned by her high command  
To show their passion by their letters.

My pen among the rest I took,  
Lest those bright eyes that cannot read  
Should dart their kindling fires, and look  
The power they have to be obeyed.

Nor quality, nor reputation,  
Forbid me yet my flame to tell;  
Dear five-years-old befriends my passion,  
And I may write till she can spell.

For, while she makes her silk-worms beds  
With all the tender things I swear—

Whilst all the house my passion reads  
 In papers round her baby's hair—  
 She may receive and own my flame ;  
 For, though the strictest prude should know it,  
 She'll pass for a most virtuous dame,  
 And I for an unhappy poet.  
 Then, too, alas ! when she shall tear  
 The lines some younger rival sends,  
 She'll give me leave to write, I fear,  
 And we shall still continue friends.  
 For, as our different ages move,  
 'Tis so ordained (would Fate but mend it !)  
 That I shall be past making love,  
 When she begins to comprehend it.'

Although Prior made use of the heroic couplet, he was, as we have seen, a rebel against it at heart and tried to escape from it as much as possible. Though his 'Solomon' is in heroic couplets, he wrote 'Alma' in Hudibrastic metre, some pieces in blank verse with little success, and experimented with the Spenserian stanza. He is one of our first writers to use the tripping anapaestic measure gracefully. Thus, although Prior is a minor poet—the first graceful writer of *vers de société*—he is of some importance in the history of English prosody. His prose is on the same graceful level with his verse and has only recently been collected and published. His 'Dialogues of the Dead' are a clever following of Lucian and anticipate Landor.

Gay first makes his appearance as a poet with 'Rural Sports' (1711), a moderate achievement dedicated to Pope. It was at Pope's suggestion that he burlesqued Ambrose Philips' pastorals in his 'Shepherd's Week' (1714), a work far superior to its original. His 'Trivia; or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London' followed this, two years later, and was very popular; but more highly esteemed now are the 'Fables,' whose publication began in 1727. The next year was acted his 'Beggar's Opera,' which, according to Johnson (whose authority for the facts is Spence), arose out of Swift's remark that a Newgate Pastoral might make an odd pretty sort of thing. The play achieved great and unexpected success: 'written in ridicule of the musical

John Gay,  
1685-1732.

Italian drama, it was first offered to Cibber and his brethren at Drury Lane, and rejected; being then carried to Rich [manager of Covent Garden Theatre], it had the effect, as was ludicrously said, of making Gay rich, and Rich gay.' The play is sprightly and amusing, but not remarkable for great literary merits, though the dialogue and songs are very clever, and some of the latter pretty, as, for instance, the one sung by Lucy on parting from Macheath :—

‘I like the fox shall grieve,  
Whose mate hath left her side ;  
Whom hounds from morn to eve  
Chase o’er the country wide.  
  
Where can my lover hide ?  
Where cheat the weary pack ?  
If love be not his guide,  
He never will come back.’

Like Addison’s ‘Cato,’ the ‘Beggar’s Opera’ was interpreted, if not intended, as a political satire. The quarrel between Peachum, the receiver of stolen goods, and Lockit, the gaoler, was held to be a hit at a dispute between Sir Robert Walpole and his fellow-minister, Lord Townsend. The well-known quotation

‘How happy could I be with either,  
Were t’other dear charmer away !’

is taken from the song of the bold highwayman, Captain Macbeth, distracted between the charms of Polly Peachum and Lucy Lockit.

Ambrose Philips, one of Addison’s satellites, and the butt of Gay and Pope, wrote besides the ‘Pastorals’ already mentioned ‘Persian Tales,’ several plays, and some short poems. A volume of these last, published in 1748, was ridiculed (more severely than they deserved) under the jeering title of *Namby-Pamby*, a word which has conferred an unpleasing immortality on the poet. Tickell, another of the ‘little senate,’ is chiefly notable as the author of the version of the first book of the ‘Iliad’ which so excited Pope’s anger, and as the writer of a fine

Ambrose Philips,

1686-1740.

Thomas Tickell,

1686-1740.

elegy on the death of his beloved Addison. Swift's verse calls for passing notice. It is fluent, easy, and pointed, and though rarely rising to anything like poetry, it is always easy to read. In a set of verses which he wrote on his own supposed death, he has given an estimate of himself which is highly interesting. He allows that he 'had too much satire in his vein,' but

. . . malice never was his aim ;  
He lashed the vice, but spared the name :  
No individual could resent,  
Where thousands equally were meant ;  
His satire points at no defect  
But what all mortals may correct ;  
True genuine dulness moved his pity,  
Unless it offered to be witty.'

Parnell's name is preserved chiefly by one poem, 'The Thomas Parnell, 1679-1718. Hermit,' a story told in very excellent manner and fine couplets. His 'Odes' seem to deserve much more attention than they receive.

Turning Allan Ramsay, 1686-1758. from these to some somewhat later minor poets, we come to Ramsay, whose 'Gentle Shepherd' (1725) 'brought back real pastoral poetry to literature.' Ramsay collected and published

Scotch songs, and it may be that from these Thomson, who was doubtless familiar with them, found encouragement in his rejection of convention for nature.

A companion of Thomson's was Mallock, or Mallet, as David Mallet, 1700-65. he preferred to call himself. Johnson justly remarks of him that 'as a writer he cannot be placed in any high class.' His repute in his own day was due to the most popular ballad of the eighteenth century, 'William and Margaret' (1724), which he never wrote, but stole. The ballad is an old one with an interesting history, but Mallet's theft was not proved till 1878. A copy of the ballad exists which can be dated 1711-12, when Mallet could hardly have written it, and there seems to be a quotation from it (which Mallet said inspired him) in the 'Knight of the Burning Pestle.' Mallet never repeated his ballad venture till the end of his

life, when he wrote the excruciatingly silly ‘Edwin and Emma’ in the same metre. Of this ballad Professor Phelps writes<sup>1</sup> that “‘William and Margaret’ has an importance, independent of its authorship, as contributing to the early hidden growth of the English Romantic movement. Its great popularity in ‘the age of prose and reason’ shows that there was a love for poetry of this kind, however much fashion condemned it in the abstract.’ Mallet, in his blank verse ‘Excursion,’ imitated Thomson; among his dramatic pieces is the masque of ‘Alfred,’ written with the collaboration of Thomson. It is remarkable on account of one song which it contains: this is ‘Rule, Britannia.’”

Another minor poet, who was a friend of Thomson’s, is John Armstrong,  
1709-79. Armstrong, whose portrait is to be found in ‘The Castle of Indolence,’ to which, it is said, he contributed some few stanzas. Armstrong, who was a doctor, wrote a blank verse poem, ‘The Art of Preserving Health’ (1744), which shows the influence of his friend.

It is curious to notice the variety of subjects treated of by the poets of the time, and the obvious dissatisfaction with the heroic distich as the one fit mode of poetic expression. Thus, in the same year as Thomson’s ‘Winter’ John Dyer, appeared, we have in Dyer’s ‘Grongar Hill’ a poem which is the work of one who went for his inspiration to Nature and to Milton. Whatever harsh things may be said of the verse of the eighteenth century, and of the artificiality and conventionality of the so-called age of prose and reason, we may be sure they do not apply to Dyer. An imaginative feeling for nature, such as we scarcely reach till we get to Wordsworth himself, combines with the skilful handling of a dainty metre, reminiscent of ‘L’Allegro’ and ‘Il Penseroso,’ to form a remarkably fascinating poem; even from but a few lines some idea of the merits of ‘Grongar Hill’ may be formed:—

‘And see the rivers, how they run  
Thro’ woods and meads, in shade and sun,  
Sometimes swift, sometimes slow,

---

<sup>1</sup> ‘English Romantic Movement.’

Wave succeeding wave, they go  
 A various journey to the deep,  
 Like human life to endless sleep !  
 Thus is Nature's vesture wrought,  
 To instruct our wandering thought ;  
 Thus she dresses green and gay,  
 To disperse our cares away.'

Dyer's other chief work is a poem in blank verse, published in 1747; it is called 'The Fleece,' and deals with its subject from the sheep to the carpet.

A poet of an earlier generation, who did not, however, begin to write till middle age, is Somerville, William Somerville, 1677-1742. whose blank-verse description of hunting, dogs, horses, and so forth appeared in 1735, under the title of 'The Chase.'

A pleasant, cheerful poem, in the Hudibrastic metre that Swift handled so easily, and written somewhat after Swift's fashion, is 'The Spleen' of Matthew Green, Matthew Green, 1690-1737. This was first published in the year of the author's death. Green had a post in the Custom House, and wrote little, and that for his own diversion; thus he says, in his easy fashion,

'I only transient visits pay,  
 Meeting the Muses in my way,  
 Scarce known to the fastidious dames,  
 Nor skilled to call them by their names.  
 Nor can their passports in these days  
 Your profit warrant or your praise.  
 On Poems by their dictates writ,  
 Critics, as sworn appraisers, sit,  
 And mere upholsterers in a trice  
 On gems and painting set a price.  
 These tailoring artists for our lays  
 Invent cramped rules, and with strait stays  
 Striving free Nature's shape to hit,  
 Emaciate sense, before they fit.'

Byrom may just be mentioned as an overflowing rhymester, who seems to have made it the business John Byrom, 1691-1763. of his life to show that verse could be used in describing subjects for which it is most unfit. 'He prattled incessantly,' says Mr. Henley, 'and always in

numbers. . . . It was in metre that he anatomized beaux and astrologers, made fables and apogues and epigrams, criticised verses and theologies, spoke breaking-up addresses, painted the free and happy workman, and set forth the kindred mysteries of poesy and shorthand.' It is not uninstructive to notice in an exaggerated case like Byrom's the way in which the range of subjects for verse was being enlarged.

'Now, Muse, we'll sing of rats,' is said to have been a poetic outpouring of Dr. Grainger, who, in his James Grainger, 1721-1766. 'Sugarcane,' published in 1764 a blank-verse description of West Indian sugar culture. We have mentioned Grainger somewhat before his time—not that it much matters where such an insignificant person is mentioned—and we must turn back to glance at the works of abler verse-writers.

Glover's 'Admiral Hosier's Ghost' is a ballad in a swinging trochaic metre. It was written in Richard Glover, 1712-1785. 1739, and commemorates a gallant sailor, who is said to have died of a broken heart; he had lost many of his men by disease while on duty in the West Indies, being sent to overawe the Spaniards, but not being allowed to attack them. The ghost is supposed to tell his pitiful story to the victorious Admiral Vernon, after the latter's defeat of the Spaniards off Portobello :—

‘I, by twenty sail attended,  
Did this Spanish town affright ;  
Nothing then its wealth defended  
But my orders not to fight.  
O ! that in the rolling ocean  
I had cast them with disdain,  
And obeyed my heart’s warm motion  
To have quelled the pride of Spain.

For resistance I could fear none,  
But with twenty ships had done  
What thou, brave and happy Vernon,  
Hast achieved with six alone.  
Then the Bastimentos never  
Had our foul dishonour seen,  
Nor the sea the sad receiver  
Of this gallant train had been.’

Glover's more ambitious works are but little valued now. His 'Leonidas' (1737) is a blank-verse epic in twelve books, to which the 'Athenaid' (published after his death) is a sequel. Another of his works is a poem called 'London,' written in 1739, with the object —like 'Hosier's Ghost'—of inflaming the public against Spain.

The year before, a more famous poem with the same Johnson's name had been published by a new writer. Poems. This was Johnson, whose life and writings will demand some share of our attention later on (p. 611), but with whose poems alone we deal in this chapter. The chief of these are the above-mentioned satire, 'London' (which appeared on the same morning as Pope's satire '1738,' and surpassed the latter in popularity), and 'The Vanity of Human Wishes,' 1749. Both of these satires are based on Juvenal, and are written in Pope's manner. But there is a stateliness in his verse and a dignity in his scorn, free from the petty personal spite that informs Pope, for which he owes nothing to either his Latin or his English model. 'You see in it,' says a critic speaking of 'London,' 'a mind purer and sterner than Dryden's, Pope's, or Churchill's, or even Juvenal's; "doing well to be angry" with a degenerate age, and a false, cowardly country, of which he deems himself unworthy to be a citizen. If there is rather too much of the *saeva indignatio*, which Swift speaks of as lacerating his own heart, it is a nobler and less selfish ire than his, and the language and verse which it inspires are full of the very soul of dignity. In the "Vanity of Human Wishes" he becomes one of those hunters "whose game is man"; and from assailing premiers, parliaments, and the vices of London and England, he passes, in a very solemn spirit, to expose the vain hopes, wishes, and efforts of humanity. . . . The portraits of Wolsey, Bacon, and Charles XII. are admirable in their execution, and in their adaptation to the argument of the piece.' The specimen we give is from 'The Vanity of Human Wishes.' In one passage he warns the youthful enthusiast for knowledge that, even though Virtue guard him and Reason guide him, even

though Novelty, Beauty, or Sloth should not distract him, yet will there be much sorrow in store for him :—

'Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,  
Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade ;  
Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,  
Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee.'

Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,  
And pause awhile from letters, to be wise ;  
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,  
*Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.*  
See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,  
To buried merit raise the tardy bust ;  
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,  
Hear Lydiat's life and Galileo's end.'

Johnson's minor poems call for but little notice, though the 'Prologue' which he wrote for Goldsmith's 'Good-natured Man' has been highly praised. Some of the verses on the death of his old friend and dependent, Levett (1782), are extremely pathetic; three stanzas we give here :—

'In Misery's darkest cavern known,  
His useful care was ever nigh ;  
Where hopeless Anguish poured his groan,  
And lonely Want retired to die.<sup>1</sup>  
No summons mocked by chill delay ;  
No petty gain disdained by pride ;  
The modest wants of every day,  
The toil of every day supplied.  
His virtues walked their narrow round,  
Nor made a pause, nor left a void ;  
And sure the Eternal Master found  
His single talent well employed.'

'Sir, we are a nest of singing birds,' said Johnson, speaking of Pembroke College. One of that college's 'singing birds' was Shenstone, the author of 'The Schoolmistress.' This poem, published in 1742 (four years before 'The Castle of Indolence'), is in the Spenserian stanza, and shows a longing on the part of the author to turn from the popular models of his day, in regard to both manner and

<sup>1</sup> Levett was a doctor who gave his skill to the poor.

matter. But the author was very anxious that the public should not take him seriously, and explained the joke by adding an index, 'purely to show fools that I am in jest.' The index was neglected and the poem taken seriously, with the result that Shenstone found himself deservedly famous, and then he or his publisher suppressed the index. Wordsworth alludes to this as a good instance of the timidity of authors. In 'The Schoolmistress' the poet tries to depict village life favourably and to describe nature as it is, and it must be admitted that in this one work he has drawn a charming picture, which deserves to be known better than it is.

Shenstone's ballad 'Jemmy Dawson' (1746), on the hanging of one of the Manchester rebels, is written with studied simplicity, and is meant to be extremely pathetic. Yet it seems to be little less than ludicrous, and it is impossible, with the best will in the world, 'to heave a sigh,' far more to 'shed a tear,' over his hero. These are the two concluding verses of the ballad. 'Young Dawson' being hanged—

'The dismal scene was o'er and past,  
The lover's mournful hearse retired ;  
The maid drew back her languid head,  
And, sighing forth his name, expired.

Though justice ever must prevail,  
The tear my Kitty sheds is due ;  
For seldom shall she hear a tale  
So sad, so tender, and so true.'

Yet, if the ballad is poor, it is interesting to note Shenstone's earnest attempt to reach a method of which he but vaguely saw the outline. He is thoroughly artificial, but he tries not to be so.

In the year that Shenstone's 'Schoolmistress' was being published we have a good instance of Milton's influence in the first portion of Young's 1684-1765. 'Night Thoughts.' The series of poems embraced by this title was completed in 1744. It consists of nine books, of which eight constitute 'The Complaint,' and the last 'The Consolation.' Young's wife, his step-

daughter, and her husband had died within a few years of one another, and the poem gives in blank verse, at times of singular dignity, his reflections on ‘Life, Death, and Immortality.’ The following lines, which occur in the last book (‘Consolation’), give some idea of the scope of the work :—

‘Through many a field of moral and divine  
The Muse has strayed ; and much of sorrow seen  
In human ways ; and much of false and vain,  
Which none, who travel this bad road, can miss.  
O'er friends deceased full heartily she wept ;  
Of love divine the wonders she displayed ;  
Proved man immortal ; showed the source of joy ;  
The grand tribunal raised ; assigned the bounds  
Of human grief : in few, to close the whole,  
The moral muse has shadowed out a sketch,  
Though not in form, not with a Raphael's stroke,  
Of most our weakness need believe, or do,  
In this our land of travail, and of hope,  
For peace on earth, or prospect of the skies.’

This poem enjoyed extensive popularity far into the nineteenth century, until, in fact, the last lover of didactic poetry and sermons in verse had died. It survives now only in such copy-book headings as ‘Procrastination is the thief of time,’ which many have written without suspecting blank verse.

A much earlier work of Young’s than the ‘Night Thoughts’ is his poem on ‘The Last Day’ (1713), written in heroic couplets. Among the large amount of his other writings—odes, lyrics, tragedies, essays, etc.—we need only mention ‘The Universal Passion’ (1725-28), consisting of seven satires in neat couplets. The best of these satires, however—those ‘On Women,’ the fifth and sixth—are sufficiently like Pope’s epistle ‘On the Characters of Women’ (written after Young’s) to have caused them to be little read.

Gloomier than Young’s ‘Night Thoughts’ is a poem by Robert Blair, Blair, another of the ‘Churchyard’ School, 1699-1746. entitled ‘The Grave.’ It consists of about eight hundred lines of blank verse—the lines having often, as in the dramatists, an extra syllable—and dwells with a

sort of morbid enjoyment on the horrors of the tomb.  
 'What is this world?' he cries—

'What but a spacious burial-field unwalled,  
 Strewed with death's spoils, the spoils of animals  
 Savage and tame, and full of dead men's bones?  
 The very turf on which we tread once lived,  
 And we that live must lend our carcases  
 To cover our own offspring——'

Blair is an early instance of the Churchyard spirit, his poem having been written before 1731, though not published till 1741. In form it is more original than Young's, and appears to hark back to the blank verse of the later Elizabethan dramatists.

Another poet who is known to us mainly by one work  
<sup>Mark</sup> is Akenside, the author of 'The Pleasures of  
 Akenside, Imagination,' a blank-verse didactic poem,  
<sup>1721-1770.</sup> completed (in its first form) in 1744. The  
 design of his work, he tells us, is 'to give a view of the  
 pleasures of imagination in the largest acceptation of the  
 term; so that whatever our imagination feels from the  
 agreeable appearances of nature, and all the various enter-  
 tainment we meet with either in poetry, painting, music,  
 or any of the elegant arts, might be deducible from one or  
 other of those principles in the constitution of the human  
 mind which are here established and explained.' Aken-  
 side wrote a poetic inscription for a statue of Chaucer at  
 Woodstock, in which he pays worthy homage to the great  
 master. This is in itself a sign of the times.

Smart is the last of the smaller poets whom we shall  
<sup>Christopher</sup> look at before we pass to Collins and Gray.  
<sup>Smart,</sup> He was the author of a considerable amount of  
<sup>1722-1776.</sup> verse, collected and published in 1791 after  
 his death. These are admitted to be of very trifling merit,  
 and we may neglect them. Curiously enough, his fame  
 now rests on a poem which his editor omitted as being  
 worthless: it is the 'Song to David,' written during one  
 of Smart's lucid intervals, at the time of his life when he  
 was confined in a madhouse.

'There is nothing,' Mr. T. H. Ward declares, 'like the  
 "Song to David" in the eighteenth century; there is

nothing out of which it might seem to have been developed. It is true that, with great appearance of symmetry, it is ill-arranged and out of proportion; its hundred stanzas weary the reader with their repetitions and with their epithets piled up on a too obvious system. But, in spite of this touch of pedantry, it is the work of a poet, of a man so possessed with the beauty and fervour of the Psalms and with the high romance of the psalmist's life, that in the days of his madness the character of David had become a "fixed idea" with him, to be embodied in words and dressed in the magic robe of verse when the dark hour had gone by. There are few episodes in our literary history more interesting than this of the wretched bookseller's hack, with his mind thrown off its balance by drink and poverty, rising at the instant of his deepest distress to a pitch of poetic performance unimagined by himself at all other times, unimagined by all but one or two of his contemporaries, and so little appreciated by the public that when an edition of his writings was called for it was sent into the world with this masterpiece omitted.'

The few verses from this poem which we can find room for here describe the inspired singer:—

‘He sung of God—the mighty Source  
Of all things—the stupendous Force  
On which all strength depends ;  
From whose right arm, beneath whose eyes,  
All period, power, and enterprise  
Commences, reigns, and ends.

Angels—their ministry and meed,  
Which to and fro with blessings sped,  
Or with their citterns wait ;  
Where Michael with his millions bows,  
Where dwells the seraph and his spouse,  
The cherub and her mate.

Of man—the semblance and effect  
Of God and love—the saint elect  
For infinite applause—  
To rule the land, and briny broad,  
To be laborious in his laud,  
And heroes in his cause.

The world—the clustering spheres He made,  
 The glorious light, the soothing shade,  
 Dale, champaign, grove and hill ;  
 The multitudinous abyss,  
 Where secrecy remains in bliss,  
 And wisdom hides her skill.'

There is not much of the Queen Anne drawing-room  
 about this poem. It seems as if in an age of  
 common-sense and reason to be a poet one  
 must be mad. We have at all events a curious

William  
Collins,  
1721-1759.

parallel in the case of a greater poet than Smart, who, like him, ended his days in madness. This is William Collins. Collins was the son of a Chichester tradesman. After education in his native town and at Winchester, he went to Oxford, where he entered Queen's College, and subsequently migrated to Magdalen. His 'Persian Eclogues' (subsequently called 'Oriental Eclogues') were published in 1742 and his 'Odes' in 1747. He had come to London in 1744, and about that time made the acquaintance of Johnson, whose short account of him is one of the best of the 'Lives.' He formed a close friendship with Thomson, on whose death he wrote an ode (1749). The same year he wrote his 'Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands,' which was not printed till 1780. The last years of his life were clouded by insanity.

Collins' fame rests on his 'Odes,' and for them in his own time he got little praise. It is as a lyric poet, as a 'singer' pure and simple, that he stands out from among his contemporaries, and he claims a right to rank high among the great lyrists. 'In the little book of odes which dropped, a still-born immortal, from the press, and was finally burnt up even to the last procurable copy by the hands of its author in a fever-fit of angry despair, there was,' says Swinburne, 'hardly a single false note; and there were not many less than sweet or strong. There was, above all things, a purity of music, a clarity of style, to which I know of no parallel in English verse from the death of Marvell to the birth of William Blake. Here, in the twilight which followed on that splendid sunset of Pope, was at last a poet who was content to sing out what he had in him—to sing and not to say, without a glimpse of wit or a flash of eloquence.'

In the ‘little book’ of 1747, here mentioned, the longest and most ambitious poem is the ‘Ode to Liberty,’ which contains fine passages; a much shorter one shows Collins in a light that suited him better. This is the ‘Ode’ (as he calls it) written in 1746 (after the crushing of the ‘45):—

‘How sleep the brave who sink to rest  
By all their country’s wishes blessed !  
When spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,  
She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
Than fancy’s feet have ever trod.  
  
By fairy hands their knell is rung ;  
By forms unseen their dirge is sung ;  
There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray,  
To bless the turf that wraps their clay ;  
And Freedom shall awhile repair,  
To dwell a weeping hermit there.’

The ‘Ode to the Passions’ and the ‘Ode to Evening’ are reckoned among his finest compositions. In the first of these the poet tells how,

‘When Music, heavenly maid, was young,  
While yet in early Greece she sung,’

the Passions thronged round her, and, inspired and maddened by her strains, snatched up instruments that each might ‘prove his own expressive power.’ Here is, perhaps, the most beautiful stanza:—

‘But thou, O Hope, with eyes so fair,  
What was thy delightful measure ?  
Still it whispered promised pleasure,  
And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail !  
Still would her touch the strain prolong ;  
And from the rocks, the woods, the vale  
She called on Echo still through all the song ;  
And, where her sweetest theme she chose,  
A soft responsive voice was heard at every close,  
And Hope, enchanted, smiled and waved her golden hair.’

The poem recalls to us Dryden’s ‘Ode on St. Cecilia’s Day,’ and reminds us how much purer and sweeter than the greater writer’s is Collins’ strain of song. The ‘Ode to Evening’ some critics incline to think his best work; it is

a short piece (52 lines) of uniform poetic excellence in a 'softened strain,'

‘Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale,  
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,  
As, musing slow, I hail  
Thy genial loved return.’

‘Even in his own age,’ says Swinburne, ‘it was the fatally foolish and uncritical fashion to couple the name of Collins with that of Gray, as though they were poets of the *same order and kind*. As an *elegiac* poet, Gray holds for all ages to come his unassailable and sovereign station; as a *lyric* poet, he is simply unworthy to sit at the feet of Collins. Whether it may not be a greater thing than ever was done by the greater lyrist, to have written a poem of such high perfection and such universal appeal to the tenderest and the noblest depths of human feeling as Gray’s “Elegy,” is, of course, another and a wholly irrelevant question.’

Gray was born in Cornhill (London), his father being Thomas Gray, 1716-1771. engaged in business in the City. His mother’s brother was a master at Eton, and there the poet passed his school-days, quitting it in 1734 for Cambridge, where he entered at Peterhouse. On leaving Cambridge, he went for a tour on the Continent with Horace Walpole, his former school-fellow; they had a quarrel at Florence and separated, Gray returning to England in 1741. Shortly after this his father died, and Gray, abandoning his idea of practising law, returned to Cambridge. Here he passed the rest of his life. In 1742 his dear friend Richard West, son of the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, died, and it is about this time that Gray’s poetical writings begin.

The first of these was the ‘Ode to Spring,’ which was sent to West, who died before it reached him; then followed ‘Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College’ (which contains a touching allusion to his friend’s death), and the ‘Ode to Adversity.’ His best-known work, the ‘Elegy written in a Country Churchyard,’ was printed in 1751, and became immediately popular, going through four editions in two months. On Colley Cibber’s death he was offered the Poet-Laureateship, which he, however, declined.

In the same year (1757) he published his two noble odes, ‘The Progress of Poesy’ and ‘The Bard,’ both written some years before.

He had now left Peterhouse in anger, and migrated to Pembroke, of which his friend and future editor and biographer, Mason,<sup>1</sup> was a fellow. He applied in vain to Lord Bute, in 1762, for the vacant Professorship of History, but it was bestowed on him six years later by the Duke of Grafton, on whose installation as Chancellor of the University he composed his ‘Ode for Music.’ Two years later he died (1771).

‘Perhaps he was the most learned man in Europe,’ says a friend of his. ‘He was equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of science, and that not superficially, but thoroughly. He knew every branch of history, both natural and civil; had read all the original historians of England, France, and Italy; and was a great antiquarian. Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, made a principal part of his study; voyages and travels of all sorts were his favourite amusements; and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture, and gardening.’

The writer from whom the last few sentences are quoted goes on to say, ‘Perhaps it may be said, What signifies so much knowledge, when it produced so little? Is it worth taking so much pains to leave no memorial but a few poems?’ and he proceeds to show that ‘Mr. Gray was to others at least innocently employed; to himself certainly beneficially.’ The scantiness of Gray’s literary production is very remarkable, and not less so is the fine quality of nearly all he has written. Matthew Arnold’s explanation of Gray’s sterility is that he ‘fell upon an age of prose . . . an age whose task was such as to call forth in general men’s powers of understanding, wit, and cleverness, rather than their deepest powers of mind and soul.’

However this may be—and certainly the explanation seems insufficient—we find that Gray takes his scarce dis-

<sup>1</sup> William Mason (1725-1797) achieved considerable reputation as a poet in his time, but his works are of very little value. ‘Museus’ (on the death of Pope) is interesting as an imitation of Milton’s ‘Lycidas.’ His ‘English Garden’ (1772) is a blank-verse poem; his ‘Elfrida’ and ‘Caractacus’ are tragedies.

puted place among our classics by virtue of a very small amount of very exquisite work. With regard to which of his poems is the master-piece, varying opinions are held. The reading public in general would certainly decide (and perhaps rightly) for the 'Elegy': yet Gray himself was not of that opinion, declaring that 'the "Elegy" owed its popularity entirely to the subject, and that the public would have received it as well if it had been written in prose.' Undoubtedly the poem owes some of its immediate success to the cause Gray refers to, but its permanent value is due to the matchless way in which the poet has embodied 'images which find a mirror in every mind and sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo,' to the extreme beauty of its simple, dignified language, and to its perfect form. It is scarcely necessary to quote from a poem so familiar to all readers, yet we cannot withstand the temptation to repeat here a few stanzas:—

'Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
 Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,  
 Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.  
 But knowledge to their eyes her ample page  
 Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;  
 Chill penury repressed their noble rage,  
 And froze the genial current of the soul.  
 Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
 The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:  
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.  
 Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast  
 The little tyrant of his fields withstood,  
 Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,  
 Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.'

The odes are less popular than the 'Elegy'; the favourite one is that in which the poet describes his feelings on revisiting Eton, and ends with a verse whose last sentence has become a proverb:—

'To each his sufferings : all are men  
 Condemned alike to groan ;  
 The tender for another's pain,  
 The unfeeling for his own.'

Yet ah ! why should they know their fate,  
 Since sorrow never comes too late,  
 And happiness too swiftly flies ?  
 Thought would destroy their paradise.  
 No more—where ignorance is bliss  
 'Tis folly to be wise.'

'The Progress of Poesy' is a fine ode, from which we quote the concluding stanzas, which pay noble tribute to Milton and to Dryden, from the latter of whom Gray professed to have learned his own skill in verse :—

'Nor second He, that rode sublime  
 Upon the seraph-wings of ecstasy  
 The secrets of th' abyss to spy.  
 He passed the flaming bounds of place and time ;  
 The living throne, the sapphire blaze,  
 Where angels tremble while they gaze,  
 He saw ; but, blasted with excess of light,  
 Closed his eyes in endless night.  
 Behold where Dryden's less presumptuous car,  
 Wide o'er the fields of glory bear  
 Two coursers of ethereal race  
 With necks in thunder clothed, and long resounding pace.

Hark his hands the lyre explore ;  
 Bright-eyed Fancy, hovering o'er,  
 Scatters from her pictured urn  
 Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.  
 But ah ! 'tis heard no more.—

Oh lyre divine, what daring spirit  
 Wakes thee now ? Tho' he inherit  
 Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,  
 That the Theban eagle bear,  
 Sailing with supreme dominion  
 Thro' the azure deep of air ;  
 Yet oft before his infant eyes would run  
 Such forms as glitter in the Muse's ray,  
 With orient hues, unborrowed of the sun.  
 Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way  
 Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate :  
 Beneath the Good how far—but far above the Great.'

Another work of Gray which we must not omit to mention is 'The Bard,' described as 'a Pindaric ode.' It is founded on the legend of the slaughter of the Welsh bards by Edward I. on his conquest of Wales. 'The bard' of the poem, before throwing himself 'headlong from the

mountain's height,' laments over his slaughtered brethren, and foretells the ruin of Edward's race. Two fine odes taken from Norse mythology are also among Gray's poems. One of these is 'The Fatal Sisters,' describing the three weird goddesses of fate weaving the doom of warriors. The other, 'The Descent of Odin,' tells how the 'king of men' went down to the nether world to 'Hela's drear abode' to learn from the prophetess what dangers awaited his beloved son Balder.

These last two poems of his indicate that we are at the dawn of the Romantic Revival, of which we find many notes in Gray, not only in his metres but in his choice of subjects. From his prose remains more than from his poetry we gather his love for wild, romantic scenery. He had planned a 'History of English Poetry,' but his naturally indolent mind shrank from any task, and he was glad to hand over his materials to his friend Thomas Warton. In his 'Observations on English Metre' he expatiates with envy on the 'enchanting air of freedom and wildness' of Milton's versification. It is to his interesting 'Letters' and 'Journal in France' (1739) that we must turn to find his unfeigned passion for Nature, which is such an odd contrast to the feeling of many of his contemporaries, who regarded mountains and the like as ugly obstacles in the polite traveller's path. These for them were objects of terror, not of that beauty which a well-regulated mind would find in a trim Dutch garden. Addison in 1701 writes of the Alps: 'My head is still giddy with mountains and precipices, and you can't imagine how much I am pleased with the sight of a plain!'

In Thomson, Collins, Smart, and Gray we see the light of the new dawn. The Poetry that is to come will be impatient of cramping conventions, of polite city life and city thought, and will return to freedom and to Nature.

But this revolution in poetry and public taste will come about slowly. It is a mistake to suppose that by 1750, or even by 1800, the general public or even the majority of writers were converted to a taste for Romantic verse. The truth is that some of the poets were ahead of their audience,

and so they remained for the better part of a century. Collins died neglected, and we shall see later on that the original genius of Chatterton could get a hearing only by palming off its work as a medieval survival; when the fraud, or boyish prank, whichever term we like to use—it lies between the two—was discovered, Chatterton was dropped.

Nay more. Wordsworth and Coleridge were middle-aged men, and Shelley and Keats were dead, before the splendid Romantic verse of the early nineteenth century came anywhere near general recognition. Byron, a great poet but no critic, could write in ‘*Don Juan*’ (1819),

‘Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope ;

Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey,’

and these lines represent the normal attitude of the British public and its ministering reviewers. Shelley up to the time of his death (1822) was “that — atheist” to the majority of his fellow-countrymen, and after Keats died (1821) Shelley said that he would have issued a collected edition of his friend’s works if he could have believed that it would find a single reader.

If we were to dip into a Poetic Miscellany of the second half of the eighteenth century we should find it full of extracts from versifiers in heroic couplets—feeble followers of Pope, whose milk and water lays have all his defects and none of his brilliant powers.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS—FROM GOLDSMITH TO COWPER.

*Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit* appears in Goldsmith's Oliver Goldsmith: and for once, at least, an epitaph goes little 1728-1774. beyond the truth; for Goldsmith, who has given us prose of all kinds, comedies and poems, may truly be said to have achieved great distinction in each of these branches of literature. We leave his prose to a later chapter, and deal here with the rest of his work.

Goldsmith's first published poem was 'The Traveller,' which appeared in 1764. It received what was then considered the highest commendation possible, being praised as the best poem which had appeared since the death of Pope. The remark immediately suggests a sort of comparison with the earlier poet, and it is a comparison not uninstructive to make.

'The Traveller' is a didactic poem, and it is written in the classic couplet: those are the most obvious points of resemblance. It is pensive and descriptive, it is not filled with antitheses and brilliant epigrams, and it is to a great extent free from the artificial diction which had become by Pope's influence the conventional language of poetry: these are some of the more obvious points of difference. He accepted Pope as his exemplar in the technical art of versification, and he derides 'the mistaken efforts of the learned to improve it.' He has no sympathy with the forms of art that Collins and Gray had introduced, or with those of earlier English poetry that certain men of letters were about this time holding up for approval and imitation. 'What criticisms,' he says,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dedication of 'The Traveller' (to his brother, the Rev. Henry Goldsmith).

'have we not heard of late in favour of blank verse and Pindaric odes, choruses, anapæsts and iambics, alliterative verse and happy negligence?' He, for his part, abides by the old 'heroic' couplet, and to that extent he is Pope's pupil; but it is in his fresh, clear, truthful descriptions of natural scenery that we note in him one of the tendencies of the best poets of the last half of the seventeenth century. We do not need to be reminded that Goldsmith had himself visited the scenes he describes when we read '*The Traveller*' and '*The Deserted Village*.' There is not that close communion with Nature that we find in some later poets, but at least there is fidelity to her as far as the poet's powers admit.

The contents of '*The Traveller*' are fairly well described by its sub-title, '*A Prospect of Society*.' A passage, in which is set out the philosophic thesis which the poet is supporting, will serve for a fair specimen of the poem :

Nature, a mother kind alike to all,  
Still grants her bliss at labour's earnest call ;  
With food as well the peasant is supplied  
On Idra's cliff as Arno's shelvy side ;  
And though the rocky-crested summits frown,  
These rocks, by custom, turn to beds of down.  
From art more various are the blessings sent,  
Wealth, commerce, honour, liberty, content ;  
Yet these each other's power so strong contest,  
That either seems destructive of the rest.  
Where wealth and freedom reign, contentment fails,  
And honour sinks where commerce long prevails.  
Hence every state to one loved blessing prone,  
Conforms and models life to that alone.  
Each to the favourite happiness attends,  
And spurns the plan that aims at other ends ;  
Till, carried to excess in each domain,  
This fav'rite good begets peculiar pain.'

It is a matter of some interest to notice that the poem is the result of journeying abroad, and is filled with contemplation of foreign lands. Purely native on the other hand, is '*The Deserted Village*', which appeared in 1770, and is perhaps Goldsmith's most famous poem. It is longer and more elaborate than its forerunner, which in many respects it closely resembles. It abounds in charming pictures of village life as it appeared to the writer, and in plaintive,

melancholy personal reflections. Touching and pathetic as much of it is, a strain of cheerfulness runs through it, as through all Goldsmith's works, which is perhaps one reason why the reader is more apt to admire the delicate beauty of the descriptive portions than to be deeply stirred by those which are meant to move him to tears. Of sentiment and sentimentality, now beginning to take a firm hold on English writings, both in prose and verse, there is in Goldsmith's work a full share.

The poem itself is so well known that a description of it is scarcely required. 'Every schoolboy' and every school-girl has probably had to learn parts or the whole of it by heart, and it is one of the few beautiful poems which are not spoiled to them by the process. Its freedom from subtlety (and perhaps depth), its simple diction and melodious versification, are things which the young can enjoy, and of which their elders do not tire. The complete picture of the whole village, both in its prosperity and in its (imaginary) depopulation, does not impress us as real, but the bits of sketching of individual characters are lifelike and familiar. The village preacher, whose 'house was known to all the vagrant train ;' the schoolmaster whose

‘ words of learned length and thundering sound  
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around ;’

the inn where the ‘village statesman talked with looks profound,’ are portrayed with an idealizing yet faithful pencil. Goldsmith drew what he saw, but he saw humble life in a rosy light. Luxury and the results of what we call civilization are to him (theoretically) the great evil. • Here, for instance, is a picture he draws of ‘the town,’ which may serve to illustrate both the way in which he handles Pope’s couplet, and the difference between the latter’s poetical range and his own :

‘ If to the city sped—what waits him there ?  
To see profusion that he must not share ;  
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined  
To pamper luxury and thin mankind ;  
To see each joy the sons of pleasure know,  
Extorted from his fellow-creatures’ woe.  
Here while the courtier glitters in brocade,  
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade ;

Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,  
 There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.  
 The dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign,  
 Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train :  
 Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,  
 The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.  
 Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy !  
 Sure these denote one universal joy !  
 Are these thy serious thoughts ? Ah ! turn thine eyes  
 Where the poor, houseless, shivering female lies.'

The rest of Goldsmith's poetical writings consist of a few songs, an artificial ballad, 'Edwin and Angelina,' the very humorous 'Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog,' and two longer pieces, the 'Haunch of Venison' and 'Retaliation,' the latter containing a series of epitaphs on his friends—Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, etc.—who are supposed to have been invited to a feast with the author, and to have sunk overcome 'under the table.'

Goldsmith's comedies—'The Good-natured Man' and 'She Stoops to Conquer'—were produced in 1768 and 1773 respectively. The latter ranks with 'The Deserted Village' and 'The Vicar of Wakefield'<sup>1</sup> among his best work, while the bright humour of the dialogue and the plot, and the skill with which the characters are drawn, have enabled it to keep the stage to this day ; yet at the time when it was written Goldsmith feared, not unreasonably, that 'the undertaking a comedy *not merely sentimental* was very dangerous.'

In the year of the appearance of Goldsmith's 'Traveller,' died Churchill, who for three years had enjoyed Charles Churchill: a reputation as a poet. His works are now seldom 1731-1764. read, and the neglect that has fallen upon him seems to be well deserved. His pitiable life, his untimely early death, his bitter temperament, and the barren province of verse-making he chose for his own, remind us of Oldham ; but he has little of Oldham's vigour and originality. 'The Rosciad' (1761), his most successful work, is a long satire (in the classic couplet) on various contemporary actors. It made its author famous for a time, but Johnson's dictum that 'it had a temporary currency only from its audacity of abuse,

<sup>1</sup> For Goldsmith's prose (and an outline of his life) see pp. 598-602.

and being filled with living names, and that it would soon sink into oblivion,' has long been fully justified. The distinguishing characteristics of his writings are brutal scurility, excessive fluency, and a savage hatred of all forms of authority : the last, perhaps, makes him of some special interest, because, as we know, revolt against convention (and often, authority) in art and in society is a distinctive quality of the latter half of the eighteenth century. He saw at least —but so did many of his contemporaries—the feeble artificiality of much of the work of his day, though he had not the talent to find out any better way for himself. Here is a passage in which he fairly describes his own scope :

‘Me whom no Muse of heavenly birth inspires,  
No judgment tempers when rash genius fires :  
Who boast no merit but mere knack of rhyme,  
Short gleams of sense, and satire out of time,  
Who cannot follow where trim Fancy leads  
By prattling streams, o'er flower-empurpled meads :  
Who often, but without success, have prayed  
For apt alliteration's artful aid :  
Who would, but cannot, with a master's skill,  
Coin fine new epithets, which mean no ill—  
Me, thus uncouth, thus every way unfit  
For pacing poesy, and ambling wit,  
Taste with contempt beholds —’

Taste seems to have been quite in the right. Johnson gives him his due for the one quality which he certainly had, the power of writing much. ‘To be sure, he is a tree that cannot produce good fruit : he only bears crabs. But, sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than a tree which produces only a few.’ Undoubtedly, Churchill's ‘crabs’ are numerous enough ; besides his ‘Rosciad,’ there are ‘Night’ (1762), an attack on respectability, which he identifies with mean hypocrisy ; ‘The Ghost’ (1763), a long octosyllabic poem containing a caricature-portrait of Johnson ; ‘The Prophecy of Famine’ (1763), in which the above-quoted lines occur ; ‘The Author’ (1763), ‘The Candidate’ (1764), and several others.

A poem by Falconer which appeared in 1762 claims some little notice. It is entitled ‘The Shipwreck.’ William Falconer : Falconer was himself a sailor, and ‘what is best in 1732-1762. his treatment of it was learnt direct from the winds

and waves,' says Professor Dowden. There is little, however (except, perhaps, the choice of the subject of the poem), to make Falconer's work of any great interest. The critic already quoted, while giving credit to the poet for being 'a faithful and energetic narrator'—a somewhat tedious one, too, in the present writer's judgment—is bound to admit that his 'diction is the artificial diction of eighteenth-century verse handled with none of that exquisite art shown by some cultured writers of the time.' A few lines may be quoted to give some idea of Falconer's powers in descriptive narrative:

'The moment fraught with fate approaches fast,  
While thronging sailors climb each quivering mast :  
The ship no longer now must stem the land,  
And "Hard a starboard!" is the last command.  
While every suppliant voice to Heaven applies,  
The prow, swift-wheeling, to the westward flies ;  
Twelve sailors, on the foremast who depend,  
High on the platform of the top ascend ;  
Fatal retreat ! for while the plunging prow  
Immerses headlong in the wave below,  
Down pressed by watery weight the bowsprit bends,  
And from above the stem deep-crashing rends :  
Beneath her bow the floating ruins lie :  
The foremast totters, unsustained on high.'

It is not for any original poetry of his own that Percy Thomas <sup>1728-1811.</sup> is mentioned here; it is his collection of older Percy, English poems that makes his name of great importance to students of the course of English literature. This book appeared in 1765, and that date is sometimes taken as the beginning of the new romantic movement in poetry. Any such date is of course arbitrary, but no doubt the attention paid to Percy's collection does show in a very definite way the interest which was reviving in forms of art different from those to which the public had so long been accustomed. Percy, indeed, altered, adapted, and patched his manuscripts to bring them into harmony to some extent with the poetic standards of the day; but they nevertheless retained enough of their original shape to show what had been accomplished in days when writing by rule had been, it was thought, unknown, and their influence on later poetry has certainly been considerable. Among the most remarkable results of the taste of the public for older

models was the success of Chatterton's imitations—forgery seems too harsh a name for them—of mediæval poetry.

One of Chatterton's first ventures in literature was an <sup>Thomas</sup> account of the opening of an old bridge, which Chatterton, <sup>1752-1770.</sup> appeared in a Bristol journal. The ancient manuscript from which this was said to be taken had been found, Chatterton declared, in the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, by his father. This father had been connected with the church—the poet's uncle was sexton there—and it seems that he really had 'conveyed' and preserved certain old MSS. These, when they fell into his son's hands, excited his curiosity and his imitative nature. The Bristol antiquaries—antiquaries have ever been a simple race—were easily taken in, and 'Turgot's Account of Bristol, translated by T. Rowley out of Saxon into English,' 'The Dethe of Syr Charles Bawdin,' and 'Ælla,' a tragedy, were received as the genuine 'remains' of the fifteenth-century Rowley. Encouraged by his success, Chatterton began to find the attorney's office, in which he was, intolerably irksome. He determined to abandon it, and devote himself to the production of 'mediæval' MSS. He seemed at first to have discovered a rich mine. To Dodsley the bookseller he writes that he can obtain for him a copy of the MSS. of 'Ælla' from the present possessor for a very small sum; to Horace Walpole, whose 'Anecdotes of Painting' had reached a second edition in 1769, he sends a fragment on 'The Ryse of Peynteyne in Englande, wrotten by T. Rowlie 1469,' which seems at first to have completely taken in the noble dilettante. Walpole, however, was too well deceived, for his interest in Chatterton's account of the Rowley MSS. led him to ask where the poems might be found, as he would be glad to print them. Chatterton's reply seems to have aroused his suspicions, as he put the 'transcripts' in the hands of his friend Gray, whom they did *not* deceive. Chatterton, however, came up to London, and struggled to earn a living by miscellaneous literary work. Finally, with starvation and exposure waiting on him, he poisoned himself in the garret where he lodged.

The most striking thing about Chatterton's work, from an historical point of view, is the deliberate way in which

he seeks to disserve himself entirely, both in metrical form and in choice of subjects, from the poetry of his age. Of course, this was necessary for the success of his imposition ; but apart from that, it is evident that the temper of the poet had little sympathy with the standard of poetry current in the first half of the eighteenth century, and that he exemplifies in a striking way the ‘revolt against (eighteenth-century) convention in art and nature’ which has so much to do with the reappearance (or perhaps, rather, the spread) of romanticism in our literature. ‘As to the romantic spirit,’ says Mr. Watts-Dunton, ‘it would be difficult to name any one of his successors in whom the high temper of romance has shown so intense a life.<sup>1</sup> And as to the romantic form,’ as the same critic points out, ‘it is well to remember that the “new principle” which Coleridge enunciates and exemplifies in “Christabel” (1816)—the counting of accents rather than syllables, the mingling of anapæst with iamb—was practised by Chatterton long before.’

The following is a specimen of Chatterton’s verse, taken from the minstrels’ song in ‘Ælla’ :

‘When Autumn sad but sun-lit doth appear,  
With his gold-hand gilding the falling leaf,  
Bringing up Winter to fulfil the year,  
Bearing upon his back the ripened sheaf :  
When all the hills with woolly seed are white,  
When lightning-fires and gleams do meet from far the sight ;  
When the fair apple, flushed as the even sky,  
Doth bend the tree unto the fertile ground ;  
When juicy pears and berries of black dye  
Do dance in air and call the sky around ;  
Then, foul the eve may be, or be it fair,  
Methinks the heart’s content is dashed with some dark care..

A far bigger controversy than that concerning Chatterton’s harmless imposture raged round the ‘poetry’ of Ossian, which James Macpherson declared he

James Macpherson, son, 1736-1796, had translated from the original Celtic MSS.

<sup>1</sup> ‘This influence (the influence of Chatterton on the revival of the romantic temper in the present century) has worked primarily through Coleridge... And when we consider the influence Coleridge himself had upon the English romantic movement generally, and especially upon Shelley and Keats, and the enormous influence these latter have had upon subsequent poets, it seems impossible to refuse to Chatterton the place of the father of the New Romantic School.’ Keats also came directly under Chatterton’s influence.

Macpherson published his first venture, under the title of 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry,' in 1760, and, emboldened by the success it met with, produced further versions of pseudo-Celtic poems in 1762 and the following years. The genuineness of the Macpherson discoveries was questioned at the very outset, Johnson in particular stoutly refusing to believe in them; but many put implicit faith in them, and (especially on the Continent) they were hailed with delight as a wonderful recovery from the stores of the past. The reception accorded to them sufficiently marks at least the longing for some new thing in poetry, and it shows us how the reaction against 'correctness' and frigidity in poetry led to a taste for the bombastic, which blended well enough with the appetite for sentimentality in literature now so rapidly growing. A short specimen of Macpherson's work—it is from 'Croma'—may interest the reader:

'It was the voice of my love! Few are his visits to the dreams of Malvina! Open your airy halls, ye fathers of mighty Toscar. Unfold the gates of your clouds, the steps of Malvina's departure are near. I have heard a voice in my dream. I feel the fluttering of my soul. Why didst thou come, O blast from the dark-rolling of the lake? Thy rustling wing was in the trees, the dream of Malvina departed. But she beheld her love, when his robe of mist flew on the wind; the beam of the sun was on his skirts, they glittered like the gold of the stranger. It was the voice of my love! few are his visits to my dreams!

But thou dwellest in the soul of Malvina, son of mighty Ossian. My sighs arise with the beams of the east; my tears descend with the drops of night. I was a lovely tree, in thy presence, Oscar, with all my branches round me; but thy death came like a blast from the desert, and laid my green head low; the spring returned with its showers, but no leaf of mine arose. The virgins saw me silent in the hall, and they touched the harps of joy. The tear was on the cheek of Malvina: the virgins beheld me in my grief. Why art thou sad, they said, thou first of the maids of Lutha? Was he lovely as the beam of the morning, and stately in thy sight?'

Beattie's 'Judgment of Paris' appeared in 1765, and was followed six years later by the first book of a poem James Beattie, which has made him better known—'The Minstrel.' 1783-1803. This is written in Spenserian stanzas, a metre over which Beattie exhibits considerable command. Beyond this, however, he can scarcely be said to have succeeded in his avowed attempt 'to imitate Spenser in the measure of his

verse, and in the harmony, simplicity, and variety of his composition.' His poem has certainly one striking characteristic of the 'Fairy Queen': it is almost impossible to keep the thread of the narrative in mind or to comprehend the 'plot' of the work. 'The design was,' says Beattie, 'to trace the progress of a poetical genius, born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing as a minstrel—that is, as an itinerant poet and musician—a character which, according to the notions of our forefathers, was not only respectable, but sacred.' We select a couple of stanzas for the reader :

'The end and the reward of toil is rest :  
Be all my prayer for virtue and for peace.  
Of wealth and fame, of pomp and power possessed,  
Who ever felt his weight of woe decrease ?  
Ah ! what avail the lore of Rome and Greece,  
The lay heaven-prompted and harmonious string,  
The dust of Ophir, or the Tyrian fleece,  
All that art, fortune, enterprise, can bring,  
If envy, scorn, remorse, or pride the bosom wring !'

'Let Vanity adorn the marble tomb  
With trophies, rhynes, and scutcheons of renown,  
In the deep dungeon of some Gothic dome,  
Where night and desolation ever frown.  
Mine be the breezy hill that skirts the down ;  
Where a green grassy turf is all I crave,  
With here and there a violet bestrown,  
Fast by a brook, or fountain's murmuring wave ;  
And many an evening sun shine sweetly on my grave.'

A certain amount of influence over succeeding poets is attributed to the 'Minstrel.' 'It exactly reflected,' says Mr. Saintsbury, 'the vague and ill-instructed craving of the age for the dismissal of artificial poetry, and for a return to nature and at the same time to the romantic style.'

In an account of eighteenth-century poetry, our concern with Erasmus Darwin is of the very slightest; for, Darwin: whatever definition of poetry we may frame to ourselves, or whatever idea of it we may have, it is impossible to make it cover such works as 'The Loves of the Plants' (1789), 'The Botanic Garden' (1791), and other metrical compositions of the same kind. The interest attach-

ing to Darwin's writing is chiefly in connection with the hints of a great scientific theory to be found therein, which has immortalized the name of his grandson. Erasmus Darwin uses Pope's couplet with respectable workmanship, but he has no poetic gifts, and the subjects he chooses are singularly unfitted for treatment in verse. Here are some lines ('Economy of Vegetation') describing man's first knowledge of fire :

‘Nymphs ! your soft smiles uncultured man subdued,  
And charmed the savage from his native wood ;  
You, while amazed his hurrying hordes retire  
From the fell havoc of devouring fire,  
Taught—the first Art !—with piny rods to raise  
*By quick attrition the domestic blaze.*’

Crabbe was born in the little fishing village of Aldeburgh in Suffolk, his father occupying a humble post in George Crabbe : the Customs service. He was apprenticed in his 1754-1832. youth to an apothecary, but his taste for literature asserted itself early, and inclined him to abandon his medical career. This he did finally at the age of four-and-twenty, when he came to London and tried to earn a living by literary work. His first poem, ‘The Candidate,’ appeared in 1780 ; it brought him no profit and not great fame. It is from his acquaintance with Burke soon after this that his success begins. Burke befriended him in every possible way. He helped him with money, he entertained him as his guest, he introduced him to publishers and to influential friends, such as Johnson and Reynolds.

Crabbe's first poems after his friendship with \* Burke had begun were ‘The Library’ (1781) and ‘The Village’ (1783). In 1781 the poet took orders. He then became chaplain to the Duke of Rutland, being subsequently appointed to the rectories of Frome, of West Allington, and of Trowbridge, dying at the last-named in 1832. The only poem of his besides those mentioned above, which belongs to our period, is ‘The Newspaper’ (1785). His next work, ‘The Parish Register,’ appeared after an interval of twenty-four years. It was followed by ‘The Borough’ (1810), ‘Tales in Verse’ (1812), and ‘Tales of the Hall’ (1819).

In ‘The Village’ Crabbe seeks to depict the life of the

rustic poor: not as it had been done in the artificial shepherd and shepherdess pastoral, not as it appears in the rosy tints of Goldsmith's pictures, but in all its reality, sordid, gloomy and stern, as it for the most part is. 'Cast by fortune,' he says,

‘On a frowning coast  
Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast,  
Where other cares than those the Muse relates,  
And other shepherds dwell with other mates,  
By such examples taught, I paint the cot,  
*As Truth will paint it, and as bards will not.*’

'Crabbe's realism,' says Mr. Leslie Stephen, 'preceding even Cowper, and anticipating Wordsworth, was the first important indication of one characteristic movement in the contemporary school of poetry. His clumsy style and want of sympathy with the new world isolated him as a writer. . . . But the force and fidelity of his descriptions of the scenery of his native place, and of the characteristics of the rural population, give abiding interest to his work. His pathos is genuine and deep, and to some judgments his later works atone for the diminution in tragic interest by their gentleness and simple humanity.'

Cowper's father was rector of a Hertfordshire parish and William of good family; his mother, whose memory is pre-Cowper: served in the poet's pathetic and beautiful 'Lines,' 1791-1800. was also of gentle birth. Sent to a private school in Bedfordshire at a very tender age, Cowper seems to have suffered torments at the hands of his companions that increased his natural disposition to be timid and melancholiac. At Westminster School, to which he subsequently went, and where Churchill, Colman and Lloyd were among his companions, his aversion to companionship and his state of depression grew upon him. He left school at eighteen, after a good classical education, and was articled to an attorney. In 1754 he was called to the Bar, but never practised. A few years later his uncle secured for him certain well-paid clerkships in the House of Lords, but the difficulties raised in connection with their presentation so affected his nervous temperament that, after an attempt to commit suicide, his mind gave way in 1763. On his recovery he became a member of the Unwin household at

Huntingdon. On Mr. Unwin's death (1767) the family removed to Olney, where Cowper accompanied them. With Newton, the curate of Olney, he composed the little book of 'Olney Hymns' (published 1779). In 1773 Cowper was afflicted again with an attack of insanity. In 1782 appeared his first volume, containing 'The Progress of Error,' 'Table Talk,' 'Conversation,' 'Truth,' 'Expostulation,' 'Hope,' 'Charity.' Cowper had taken up writing verse, as he had taken up gardening and the care of hares, to distract him from his melancholy. It is said that Mrs. Unwin suggested it to him, giving him 'The Progress of Error' for his first subject. A new friend, Lady Austen, set him to write on 'The Task' and 'John Gilpin,' which appeared, together with 'Tirocinium,' in 1785. In 1791 his translation of the 'Iliad' appeared, having occupied him for many years. The closing years of his life were darkened by insanity.

'The Task' is perhaps the most famous of Cowper's works. It is a long poem in blank verse, divided into six books, whose titles are respectively 'The Sofa,' 'The Timepiece,' 'The Garden,' 'The Winter Evening,' 'The Winter Morning Walk,' and 'The Winter Walk at Noon.' A brief analysis of one of these may enable the student to get some insight into the characteristics of Cowper's poetry. 'The Winter Morning Walk' opens thus :

'Tis morning : and the Sun with ruddy orb  
Ascending fires th' horizon ; while the clouds,  
That crowd away before the driving wind,  
More ardent as the disk emerges more,  
Resemble most some city in a blaze,  
Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray  
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,  
And, tingeing all with his own rosy hue,  
From ev'ry herb and every spiry blade  
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.  
Mine, spindling into longitude immense,  
In spite of gravity, and sage remark  
That I myself am but a fleeting shade,  
Provokes me to a smile.'

The poet passes on to describe the objects he meets with in his morning's walk—the cattle mourning in corners, the woodman striding forth, 'leaving unconcerned the cheerful haunts of men,' the poultry strutting up to be fed, the

fantastic effects of snow and ice on the waterfall, and the spray it throws up. This leads him to think of the palace of ice built by the ‘imperial mistress of the fur-clad Russ.’ Then he discusses wars and their origin, the growth of monarchy and the evils of it; he contrasts the loyalty of France and of England; he breaks out into an eloquent apostrophe to Liberty, and in indignant denunciation of the tyrannic French despotism he addresses the Bastille in words which express a prophetic hope soon to be realized. He then goes on, after extolling political and social liberty as one of the chief glories of England, to praise spiritual liberty as the highest good. ‘Chains,’ he cries—

‘Chains are the portion of revolted man,  
Stripes and a dungeon; and his body serves  
The triple purpose.’

From this state man’s only release is in the grace of God, says the poet; and here he states his creed with a fervid clearness such as had not been given to religion in poetry since Milton’s time, and gives full expression to the chief new element in his poetry—the love of nature as a book given by God to man, who understands it fully only by the help of worship and faith.

‘An interesting writer,’ says Mr. T. H. Ward,<sup>1</sup> ‘has characterized the tendencies of poetry in the latter half of the eighteenth century as “love of natural description and attempts at a more vivid and wider delineation of human character and incident;” two tendencies which, we may add, are but different forms of one—of the revolt against convention both in art and society. The joy in natural objects, of which we have found traces in many writers since Thomson, begins to be linked with a sense of the brotherhood of mankind; to the religious mind—and the wide reach of the religious revival must be remembered—this sense of brotherhood and this sense of natural beauty being sharpened and strengthened by the belief in the near presence of the Creator and Father of all. Cowper is the artist who has expressed, in a new and permanent form, this complex sentiment’;—and it is mainly this which makes

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<sup>1</sup> ‘English Poets,’ vol. iii.

him of such great interest in the period we are studying. He is not one of our greatest poets, but in him are exemplified so plainly the growth of the fresh elements in poetry, the tendencies of the age which resulted in the French Revolution on the one hand and in the Wordsworthian poetry on the other, that his works are deserving of the most diligent attention from the student of literary history.

‘No voice divine the storm allayed,  
No light propitious shone,  
When, snatched from all effectual aid,  
We perished, each alone :  
But I beneath a rougher sea  
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.’

Such utterances of the soul, did we find them often more frequently in Cowper’s work, would place him indeed high among our poets ; but it is veritably the cry of a drowning soul, wrung from the death agony—we must not look for it more than once. ‘To turn from a poem of Cowper’s to a poem of Pope’s, or even of Goldsmith’s, says the discriminating critic already quoted, ‘is to turn from one sphere of art to quite another, from unconscious to conscious art. *Formal gardens in comparison with woodland scenery*, as Southey said ; and how much that means ! It means that the day of critical and so-called classical poetry is over ; that the day of spontaneous, natural, romantic poetry has begun. Burns and Wordsworth are not yet, but they are close at hand.’

Burns was the son of a peasant-farmer, whose memory is enshrined in ‘The Cotter’s Saturday Night.’ The father, during Robert’s life at home, was engaged in an unequal struggle with misfortune, and died hopelessly involved in 1784. The poet was on the point of leaving Scotland for a clerkship in Jamaica, when the success of his first volume of poems, published at Kilmarnock in 1786, induced him to alter his plans. In Edinburgh the following winter he was lionised without losing his independence of spirit. In 1788 he married Jean Armour, and rented a farm at Ellisland in Nithsdale, the working of which he attempted to combine with a small appointment in the Excise ; but his farming was not successful. He would have liked the life well enough, he

Robert  
Burns  
(1759-1796.)

says, had he tilled his own acres. In 1791 he moved to Dumfries ; he describes his life there as ‘hurry of business, grinding the faces of the publican and the sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise, making ballads, and then drinking and singing them.’ In 1795 his health began to give way, and then, through the rapid life he had led, quickly declined ; he died July 21, 1796.

Burns has an important place in that phase of the ‘romantic’ and naturalistic reaction which belongs to the close of the eighteenth century. Pure natural <sup>His</sup> Poetry. feeling, wholly free from artifice, returned to English song. There was a revolt against convention in society as in art ; hence we find a wider and more vivid delineation of human character and incident. The poetry of the home appears. There is an extension of human sympathies to the poor, to animals, and to children. Humanity becomes a study ; social questions begin to awaken interest. All these features appear in the poetry of Cowper, Crabbe, Blake, and Burns. In the last two the democratic spirit is plainly seen. Burns grew up in a revolutionary atmosphere ; the sound of revolution in the distance raised passion to a white heat. In the one early fragment that he was unwilling to let die, the piece beginning ‘All devil as I am, a damned wretch,’ we find the democratic, even revolutionary, creed of his life. Gray could only imagine Grandeur hearing

‘with a disdainful smile

‘The short and simple annals of the poor’;

whereas Burns could write, with the certainty of a response outside his own class :

‘The rank is but the guinea stamp ;  
The man’s the gowd for a’ that.’

Needless to say we approach Burns with the deprecating diffidence of the Southron who knows that criticism of him is permitted only to Scotsmen of pure blood. Fortunately we are in the number of his ardent admirers. In 1780 he was cutting peat—quite unlike a great poet—a rather coarse fresh-coloured young fellow, with those large dark eyes

which were the admiration of Sir Walter Scott. The year of the publication of Cowper's 'Task' was also the spring-tide of Burns's poetry. It came upon him with a burst. Hitherto his landscape had been Thomsonian, nothing spiritual, little more than a mere heaping up of detail. In 1785 he threw this off largely. 'The Vision,' which is an expression of Burns's decision to consecrate his whole soul to poetry, is a wonderfully delicate and tender poem, wherein he sees the Scottish muse come in, in the guise of a young girl. Another notable poem is 'Halloween,' with its comic spirit, its coarseness, and the fine art of the contrast between the noisy kitchen and the scene outside. Perfectly wonderful fragments of nature are to be found in pieces little known, such as the 'Epistle to William Simson' and the 'Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson.' Here is a verse from 'Halloween' to which it is pretty obvious that Tennyson must make acknowledgments:—

‘Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,  
As thro’ the glen it wimpl’t;  
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays,  
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl’t;  
Whyles glitter’d to the nightly rays,  
Wi’ bickerin dancin dazzle;  
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,  
Below the spreading hazel  
Unseen that night.’

If he had been an Englishman, we should almost have put him at the head of the Nature movement.

Burns was fortunate in the time of his appearance, for his century was the great lyrical period of the Lowlands of Scotland. As Henley says: 'Anyone who has tried to write a song will agree with me when I say that a lyrical idea—by which I mean a rhythm, a burden, and a drift—once found, the song writes itself. It writes itself easily or with difficulty—it writes itself well or ill—but in the end it writes itself. In this matter of lyrical ideas Burns was fortunate beyond any of Apollo's sons. He had no need to quest for them: there they lay ready to his hand, and he had but to work his will with them. . . . What he found was of quite extraordinary worth to him; what

he added was himself, and his addition made the life of his find perennial.'

Burns's chief debt was to Robert Fergusson, whose poems had been collected in 1773, the year before he died, insane, at the early age of twenty-four. The influence of that young Edinburgh satirist, Burns's predecessor in Scots poetry, became more and more apparent in the years 1782-7. Burns for the time grew less lyrical, and devoted himself to satire and description. In the Kilmarnock volume most of the poems are in Fergusson's favourite stanza—here is an example of it as written by 'Rabbie' :—

‘Ramsay an’ famous Fergusson  
Gied Forth an’ Tay a lift aboon ;  
Yarrow an’ Tweed to monie a toun  
Owre Scotland rings ;  
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an’ Doon,  
Naeboddy sings’ - .

and in his style, although they far surpass their model in trenchant satire and poetic insight. In one thing in particular Fergusson had shown the way to Burns: in his habit of dealing directly with the subjects that lay nearest to his hand, dealing with them faithfully and freely in the homely tongue he so well knew how to use, he had marked out the path which his successor was to tread with a firmer, a more assured step.

A necessary complement to the above quotation from Henley is an account of Burns's method of composing a song, as described by him in a letter of September 1793. ‘Until I am complete master of a tune in my own singing (such as it is) I never can compose for it. My way is—I consider the poetic sentiment corresponding to my idea of the musical expression, then choose my theme, begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed.’ This humming of the air he elsewhere calls ‘sowthing the tune over and over.’

Henley, in his fine essay on Burns, says: 'Outside the Vernacular, in fact, he was a rather unlettered Eighteenth Century Englishman, and the models which he must naturally prefer before all others were academic, stilted, artificial, and unexemplary to the highest point.' There is truth in this, but it is not the whole truth. When Burns strung himself up to concert pitch and wrote as a man of letters, he wrote more or less ill; when he let himself go and warbled his native wood-notes wild, he wrote well, whether in English or in Scots, and, in his serious moods, mainly in English. It will be found that he used real Scots dialect almost exclusively in comic or semi-comic, grotesque or satiric pieces and passages, and that when he became serious it was his tendency to drop into English, or into English thinly disguised by a few Scots spellings. That is the reason of his world-wide popularity. If all his poems contained as much dialect as 'The Holy Fair,' Burns would be the poet of Ayrshire as Barnes is of Dorsetshire. Sometimes he begins a poem in Scots and finishes it in English, as in 'The Vision,' of which these are two following stanzas:—

'Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,  
Till half a leg was scrimply seen;  
An' such a leg ! my bonnie Jean  
Could only peer it ;  
Sae straught, sae taper, tight, an' clean —  
None else came near it.'

'Her mantle large, of greenish hue,  
My gazing wonder chiefly drew ;  
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw  
A lustre grand ;  
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,  
A well-known land.'

By far the larger proportion of Burns's best serious work can be fully appreciated by people who don't even know the meaning of 'butt an' ben.' The truth of this statement can be easily tested by taking any edition with a marginal glossary and seeing which pieces have the margins crowded. Or take a few test poems: in 'Ae fond kiss' the only word that could possibly be misunderstood is 'ilka'; in 'O my luve is like a red, red rose' there is

not one ; and Henley himself admits that in ‘ Scots wha hae ’ Burns is ‘ writing in English, and now and then propitiating the fiery and watchful Genius of Caledonia by spelling a word as it is spelt in the Vernacular.’

Burns was fortunate in his locality as in his time. The mingling of races in the West Lowlands gave a singular variety to the character of the people and to their imagination—the power of figurative and emotional expression that belongs to the Celt, the adventurous fancy of the Scandinavian, and the more mystic intellectual faculty of the Angle. Hence the contradictory attributes assigned to the Scots by different critics.

For the last ten years of his short life Burns poured out a succession of lyrics which have established his unassailable position as one of the greatest of our lyric poets. Inexhaustible was his fecundity in the making of songs : songs Jacobite, patriotic, political and revolutionary, sentimental, pathetic, and bacchanalian; songs of domestic life, songs of love and money ; humorous songs, nature songs, and songs about incidents in his own life. Probably the best of all are his love songs. Yet of real lasting love, it has been truly said, he was incapable. His capacity for loving spent itself in his poems about love, and yet that constitutes the very charm of those poems : they were often written in all the glow and flush of love at first sight : there had been no time for romance to cool down into something more real but more prosaic. Burns’s very inconstancy in love too has given us some of his gems, such as the ‘ Braes o’ Doon,’ in which he enters into the feelings of a jilted girl, and ‘ Ae fond kiss ’; but most of his love-songs boast of constancy till death, which he imagined himself to possess each time a new face roused in him a new passion. ‘ Ae fond kiss ’ was his parting song to Clarinda ; Byron and Scott agreed, as we all must, that nothing could surpass its pathos and intensity, especially in these four lines :—

‘ Had we never lov’d sae kindly,  
Had we never lov’d sae blindly,  
Never met—or never parted,  
We had ne’er been broken-hearted.’

The French Revolution was the theme of a long (never completed) rhapsody by William Blake, the artist-  
 William Blake, poet, for whose work in verse such an important  
 1757-1827. position has of late years been claimed. The main facts of Blake's life are as follows: he was the son of a Loudon tradesman, wrote verse in his childish years, received some artistic training, and became an engraver. He lived an obscure life, supporting himself by his trade, and getting little applause either for his designs or for his poems, many of which he published himself, engraving the MS. instead of having it printed. Blake had 'visions,' and insisted that he 'dictated' what he thought his best work at the bidding of spirits who visited him. Yet the most admirable of Blake's poems are to be found among the lyrics in his earliest volumes—'Poetical Sketches' (1783) and 'Songs of Innocence' (1787); a large part of his more ambitious work—notably in 'Urizen' (1794), 'Abania' (1795), and 'Jerusalem' (1804)—seems to be little more than the product of lunacy, and it is difficult to avoid the conviction that Blake was certainly mad at this time. Yet by his best writings—his almost matchless lyrics—which alone need concern us, he stands alone in his age; he is apart from eighteenth-century influence and conventions, and his models—as far as he has any—are the Elizabethans. Beautiful simplicity (where it does not happen to degenerate into childishness) and occasional bursts of melody are his most admirable characteristics; yet the really excellent poetry he has left could be put into an exceedingly small space. For one specimen of it we give 'The Tiger' from the 'Songs of Experience':—

'Tiger, tiger, burning bright  
 In the forests of the night,  
 What immortal hand or eye  
 Framed thy fearful symmetry ?

'In what distant deeps or skies  
 Burned that fire within thine eyes?  
 On what wings dared he aspire?  
 What the hand dared seize the fire?

'And what shoulder and what art  
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
 When thy heart began to beat,  
 What dread hand formed thy dread feet?

'What the hammer, what the chain,  
 Knit their strength and forged thy brain?  
 What the anvil? What dread grasp  
 Dared thy deadly terrors clasp?

'When the stars threw down their spears,  
 And watered heaven with their tears,  
 Did He smile His work to see?  
 Did He who made the lamb make thee?'

Scarce less beautiful are several of the lyrics among his earlier songs; notable are those beginning 'My silks and fine array' and 'Memory, hither come,' with their frank imitation of the Elizabethans.

And now before we quit the poetry of this age, just a word or two may be said about the poets whose poets at the main work belongs to the succeeding period, but whose first promises were given before the end of the eighteenth century closed. Foremost among these is Wordsworth, who, in his 'Lyrical Ballads' (1798), consciously and openly turns from pseudo-poetic diction to what he considers the language of natural expression, fixes his eye on the object, and endeavours to describe it as it is in the ordinary speech of man. In the same volume appears Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner,' the first published of his more enduring works; by that time, too, he had planned and partly wrought 'Christabel.' With Coleridge, one thinks of his brother-in-law, Robert Southey (1774-1843), a far more amiable man, but of little significance as a poet; his earlier work in verse includes 'Wat Tyler' and 'Joan of Arc,' replete with sympathy for liberty. W. L. Bowles (1762-1850), whom Coleridge admired, published his first volume of 'Sonnets' in 1789. Samuel Rogers, banker, friend of poets, and verse-maker, issued his 'Pleasures of Memory,' an essay in Pope's couplet, in 1793. Greater names are those of Landor and Scott, whose literary activity is just beginning when the period closes.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DRAMA.

Strictly speaking we ought to include in the term <sup>Minor</sup> *Dramatists* “eighteenth century drama” numerous plays by Vanbrugh and Farquhar. It is, however, more convenient to deal with these (pp. 474-6) as members of the Restoration group to which in tone and style they belong, and to take up our drama at the point where they left it. When Farquhar died in 1707, the profligate brilliant comedy of his era died with him. Tragedy—such tragedy as counts for literature—had already expired with Otway and Dryden. Collier’s thunders (p. 474) had pricked the consciences of playwrights. To an age of coarseness now succeeded an age of delicacy, often sham delicacy—of what Hazlitt calls the “cautious purity of the modern drama.”

Social movements favoured change. Under Charles II. the Court suffered from a reaction against Puritan severity; under Anne and the Georges there followed a reaction against the license of the Merry Monarch. The eighteenth century, a little weary of passion and conflict, is above all polite. Lord Chesterfield warns his son that to laugh aloud is bad manners. Such maxims may produce a refined society, but drama, strong and sincere, can hardly flourish among them. The theatre was further handicapped by its own development: elaborate scenery, rich if incongruous costumes, and famous actors and actresses—Macklin and Garrick, Peg Woffington and Kitty Clive, with their new personal theory of acting—attracted to themselves the attention which earlier audiences had paid to plot and dialogue.

The fact was that men of letters were turning to other

forms—the essay and the novel—while drama fell more and more into the hands of professional hacks. The novel especially—partly because it *was* novel, and partly because it went all over the country and was read by the middle classes—beat the drama out of hand as a means of self-expression. From 1700 to 1750 almost all our best writers—Addison, Steele, Thomson, Johnson, Fielding, even Pope—tried drama, but none of them found it a congenial field. After 1750 it ceased to be the rule for literary men to write plays.

Nevertheless, the century produced an immense crop of all sorts of theatrical productions, and by two writers at least, in the realm of prose comedy, high literary merit was combined with popular success.

In tragedy the age was not happy. Congreve's 'Mourning Bride' (p. 473), which had set the example of classicism, was followed by Addison's 'Cato' (1713; see p. 523), Thomson's unfortunate 'Sophonisba' (1730—famous for the 'O Sophonisba! Sophonisba, O!') parodied by a wag in the gallery—'O Jemmy Thomson, Jemmy Thomson O!'), and Johnson's stiff and cold 'Irene' (1749). These plays stick, more or less closely, to the Unities. Their faults are want of life, want of character, and a hopeless infelicity of diction.

Side by side with these came tragedies professedly romantic—Rowe's 'Fair Penitent' (1703) and 'Jane Shore' (1714), the former remarkable for the character of the 'gallant, gay Lothario' who has become a byword for fickleness in love: the dismal rants of 'Night Thoughts' Young: and the 'Douglas' (1756) of the Scottish clergyman John Home (1724-1808), whence comes "My name is Norval."

Better stuff than any of these blank verse dramas is found in a mid-century type, the *bourgeois* tragedy of George Lillo (1693-1739). 'George Barnwell' (1731) is a prose play of domestic sentiment in a middle-class household, in which an Idle Apprentice is tempted by a bad woman to murder his uncle. Punishment treads on the heels of crime, for Lillo is nothing if not moral, and George is led off to be hanged. But the play, in spite of

banality, is nearer to life than the rhetorical inanities of Cato or Norval.

All these tragedies suffer from the same fault, the labouring of their didactic purpose. This blunder becomes even more glaring when we turn to comedy. 'The stage,' says Kelly, 'should be a school of morality,' and this theory issued in a drama to which spectators went provided with extra pocket-handkerchiefs—a drama 'comic' only by virtue of its happy ending—the 'sentimental comedy' which triumphed from Farquhar to Goldsmith.

Colley Cibber (1671-1757), who became laureate on the sentimental death of Eusden in 1730, led the way with Comedy. 'Love's Last Shift' and 'The Careless Husband,' in which he is not nearly so moral as he claims to be. Steele (p. 606) followed with his 'Conscious Lovers' (1722), which Parson Adams in 'Joseph Andrews' calls the one play fit for a Christian to witness. The object of such plays is to win our sympathy for virtue in sentimental distress, and then, after we have shed tears in abundance, to console us with the spectacle of virtue triumphant.

Such writers did not have things all their own way. About the year 1720 pantomime began to be a formidable rival of legitimate drama, and in 1728 Gay's 'Beggar's Opera' (p. 525) set a fashion of topical satire, which was taken up by Fielding (p. 586) with his farces and farcical comedies full of political hits, and Foote with his witty burlesques. After the turn of the century George Colman the elder (1732-94) revived the true comic spirit in 'The Jealous Wife' (1761), a dramatisation of Fielding's 'Tom Jones,' and 'The Clandestine Marriage' (1766), in which he collaborated with Garrick. The intriguing Lady Free-love and the fop Lord Ogleby breathe the spirit of an earlier age that wore no 'Puritanic stays.'

Yet sentimental comedy triumphed again with Kelly and Cumberland. Six days before 'The Goodnatured Man' was played with doubtful success, Kelly's 'False Delicacy' (1767) harrowed all hearts with the amatory dilemma of Lady Betty Lambton and her friend Miss Marchmont, while Richard Cumberland, a rather more

virile writer, introduced in 'The Brothers' (1769) a shipwreck, a pirate crew, a wandering heir, and a deserted wife. After such rich fare it is no wonder that people looked askance at plays which returned to the original functions of comedy. But the knell of the sentimentalists was sounded by 'The Goodnatured Man,' and the death-blow was given to them by a greater play, 'She Stoops to Conquer.'

There is a dramatic fitness in the fact that to the elder Goldsmith, Colman, as manager of Covent Garden, we owe the staging of these plays of Goldsmith.

See p. 598.

Colman, as we have seen, had a turn for genuine comedy. Yet even he was frightened by their daring; and the former was by no means an unqualified success. As Macaulay puts it, 'Sentimentality was all the mode. During some years, more tears were shed at comedies than at tragedies; and a pleasantry which moved the audience to anything more than a grave smile was reprobated as low. It is not strange, therefore, that the very best scene in the "Goodnatured Man," that in which Miss Richland finds her lover attended by the bailiff and the bailiff's follower in full court dresses, should have been mercilessly hissed, and should have been omitted after the first night.'

"The Goodnatured Man" had been too funny to succeed; yet the mirth of "The Goodnatured Man" was sober when compared with the rich drollery of "She Stoops to Conquer," which is, in truth, an incomparable farce in five acts. On this occasion, however, genius triumphed. Pit, boxes, and galleries were in a constant roar of laughter. If any bigoted admirer of Kelly and Cumberland ventured to hiss or groan, he was speedily silenced by a general cry of "turn him out," or "throw him over." Two generations have since confirmed the verdict which was pronounced on that night.' This was written by Macaulay in 1856, and a third generation has endorsed his opinion, though it may perhaps demur at a sparkling comedy's being called a 'farce.' As everybody has read or seen this masterpiece, or ought to see it or read it as soon as possible, we will not describe it here, but pass on to a greater dramatist, who, following in Goldsmith's

footsteps, administered the *coup de grâce* to a comedy which Goldsmith had perhaps scotched but not killed.

This dramatist is Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who in R. B. Sheridan, his twenty-ninth year left the theatre for 1751-1816. political life. He made his first hit with 'The Rivals,' which was produced in 1775; here Sheridan showed at once that the Restoration Comedy was his model, and that to him, as to Goldsmith, the merely sentimental comedy was distasteful. In 'The Rivals' appear some of Sheridan's most famous characters—the cowardly swaggering Bob Acres, fiery Sir Lucius O'Trigger, sentimental Lydia Languish, and most delightful Mrs. Malaprop.

'The School for Scandal' (for which Sheridan has borrowed something from Fielding, as in 'The Rivals' he took a hint from Smollett) was written for Drury Lane Theatre in 1777, when Sheridan had purchased a share in the house and become manager of it; the play was a great success, as it deserved to be for its witty, polished dialogue and skilful plot. 'The Critic,' a combination of farce and burlesque, was acted towards the end of 1779; its subtitle, 'The Tragedy Rehearsed,' calls attention at once to the fact that it is modelled on the lines of 'The Rehearsal,' the play in which we saw Buckingham ridicule Dryden.

The other dramatic works of Sheridan are a farce called 'St. Patrick's Day' (1775); an opera, 'The Duenna' (1775); an adaptation from Vanburgh's 'Relapse' into 'A Trip to Scarborough' (1777); and a feeble tragedy called 'Pizarro' (1799), adapted from Kotzebue.

Sheridan at the present day is the English stage classic after Shakespeare, and to the theatrical manager 'legitimate drama' means these two dramatists first and foremost. Few theatre-goers have been denied the opportunity of seeing 'The Rivals' or 'The School for Scandal.' Sheridan had less originality than Goldsmith, but he shows greater knowledge of stage-craft, combined with a wit which has never been excelled. The history of literary drama, of drama which is literature and literature which is drama, closes with him, but there are signs of the chapter's being re-opened in our own day.

Sheridan's wit stood him in good stead as a conversationist—he belonged to the circle of the First Gentleman of Europe—and helped him to become one of the first flight of our political orators. Drama, oratory, and the field of battle have always been favourite fields in which Irishmen have displayed their genius. Sheridan's speeches against Warren Hastings (1788 and 1794) will ever be read with delight by admirers of the highest rhetoric. He was a greater orator than even his countryman Edmund Burke, who excelled as a writer, but who generally managed to bore an audience, a thing which never happened to the sparkling eloquence of Sheridan.

Sheridan's life reads like a drama with a stage Irishman as hero. The drama begins with his elopement with the beautiful daughter of the Bath musician Linley, who was a famous singer, and this was followed by two duels. The rest of his life's drama might be called, after Farquhar, 'Love and a Bottle.' All these witty lovable Irishmen, Farquhar, Steele, Goldsmith, and Sheridan, had a similar life and fate: generous and extravagant, born Bohemians, their great literary successes impoverished rather than enriched them, and they died in greater or less misery crippled with debt. They thus carried on the tradition of the University Wit of the days of Elizabeth. Sheridan's theatre at Drury Lane was burnt down in 1809, he lost his seat at Westminster in 1812, and the curtain falls on his 'almost royal funeral' in Westminster Abbey.

With him was buried our dramatic literature; for, strangely enough, the school of comedy initiated by him and his brilliant predecessor found none to carry it on, and from their time till within the last thirty or forty years the English theatre has seen no popular successes that were at the same time art. Drama has degenerated in the main into a means by which enterprising managers can extract money from the pockets of the public. Examples need not be given. They abound, and it is their unfortunate tendency to become more and more inane and often licentious.

There are some exceptions to this rule, for several of our greatest writers since 1800 have felt the attraction of the

stage, but their dramas have been lacking in stage-craft : they include Landor's 'Count Julian,' Shelley's 'The Cenci,' and Browning's 'Pippa Passes,' of which the first two might have been acted in Old Greece but not in modern Britain, while the last never could have been played on any stage except as a freak. Tennyson succeeded to some slight extent in reconciling art with popularity, but it is doubtful if Irving would have dared to produce 'Queen Mary' or 'Becket' if they had not been backed by Tennyson's rank as Laureate. Browning's 'Strafford' is a finer and more dramatic piece of work, but, though brought out at Covent Garden, it failed to keep the boards.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FICTION : FROM DEFOE TO SMOLLETT.

ON the threshold of the eighteenth century we are greeted by him who has justly been called the first of Daniel Defoe,  
1661-1731. the great English novelists ; but it is not alone in that character that we have to deal with him here—we must remember that he is also great as pamphleteer, satirist, and journalist. The details of Defoe's early life are not very exactly known, and there is some doubt as to the date of his birth, which is given variously as 1659, 1662, and 1663. His father, a butcher named Foe (his son first wrote his name as D. Foe, and afterwards D. de Foe, D. Defoe), was a Presbyterian, and is said to have intended his son for the Nonconformist ministry ; but young Defoe seems to have embarked early in trade (as a hosier and commission-agent), and to have come to grief and been obliged to hide from his creditors (about 1690-92). Before this failure he is said to have taken part in Monmouth's Rebellion, to have been present at Sedgmoor (1685), and to have gone abroad (for safety and for trade) to the Low Countries and to Spain. Certainly his writings show that he was a man of wide experience, and his knowledge of foreign countries seems to show that he had travelled, besides the fact that he boasts (in answer to an opponent who had taunted him with his not being a 'scholar') of his familiarity with foreign tongues. But from these facts no definite conclusions can be arrived at, for certainly, if we reasoned from internal evidence only, it would be impossible to believe that he had not been a full-grown witness of the horrors of the Plague ('Journal

of the Plague,' 1722) : while as for his own uncorroborated statements, these are never to be trusted, as he seems to have lied as much from habit and temperament as from any wish to deceive. Anyhow, in 1695 he obtained a post as accountant to the Commissioners of the Glass Duty, given him as a reward for some suggestions for raising war-money, which were embodied in his 'Essay on Projects,' written in 1694-5, but not published till 1698. Many other pamphlets and tracts during the next few years call for little notice, until we come to 'The True-Born Englishman' (1701), a satire in rough decasyllabic verse, written in mockery of the factious outcry against the Dutch in general, and King William in particular. This satire was wonderfully successful, and brought its author under the notice of the king, whose death, however, prevented Defoe reaping any benefit from that circumstance. This is the only metrical composition of Defoe's which we shall have occasion to notice here, except the 'Hymn to the Pillory' (1703), to which he was condemned for his pamphlet, 'The Shortest Way with the Dissenters,' which ironically advocated their utter extirpation as the only way of getting 'settled, uninterrupted union and tranquillity in this nation.' His irony was so successful that it completely took in both foes and friends, the latter of whom clamoured for the prosecution of the author. Defoe accordingly was condemned to the pillory ; but when the time for his punishment arrived the Whigs and Nonconformists had been convinced of their mistake, and the culprit became the hero of the mob, who, instead of pelting him with mud and rotten eggs, hung the pillory about with garlands, and applauded the author of the 'Hymn to the Pillory,' which appeared on the day when Defoe was first put in it. After this public triumph, however, Defoe had to go to Newgate, where he remained for a year, during which he projected the 'Review,' publishing it twice a week while in prison (1704) and for some time afterwards until February 1705, when it appeared three times a week till 1713. The rest of Defoe's work till after the accession of the Hanoverian king is journalistic and political. He was an indefatigable writer, and issued pamphlet after pamphlet on most of the questions of the

day, and seems to have been secretly paid by the Tories while apparently supporting Whig principles. It is often difficult to know when he is ironical and when sincere. His political pamphlets (such as 'What if the Pretender should come?' 'Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover') were successful in their day, but claim little attention except as specimens of Defoe's simple, unornate, vigorous, realistic style, and his power of grave sarcasm. He is chiefly notable (before 1714) as the prince of powerful journalists and able occasional writers.

After the death of Queen Anne, Defoe managed to secure the confidence of the Whig Ministry, which then came into power. We find him paid by them to get work on an ultra-Tory journal, in order to 'take the sting out of that mischievous paper,' as he boasted he had done in the case of '*Mist's Journal*'. Defoe's literary activity was at all times enormous, and after 1714 we find that he was connected with half a dozen journals, and that he wrote pamphlets and books too numerous to mention. We will confine our attention to his famous novels.

From the history of Defoe's life it is easy to see that he had almost as much love for ingenious inventions as he had talent and opportunity for making his fictions pass for reality. 'Defoe was essentially a journalist,' says a biographer; and the main business of his life was to entertain his readers with circumstantial accounts of the events of the day. It was the business of the journalist (of those days) to embellish where detail was lacking, and, if necessary, to invent. It was in this last branch that Defoe was pre-eminently fitted by nature and art to excel. He had a superb power (as was recognised in his own day) 'of forging a story, and imposing it on the world for truth.' This art he practised with immense success in the columns of the journals to which he contributed, and it very well served his purpose after he began to write for the anti-Whig journals of George's reign, to fill their columns with fanciful descriptions of facts or pseudo-facts, to the exclusion, as far as possible, of politics. It is to Defoe that we are indebted

for the 'Letter Introductory,' the precursor of the modern 'leader,' for the invention of something like 'society' journalism, and for some of the first specimens of the 'interviewer's' and 'special correspondent's' art. It is said that in these last two branches fiction is still not altogether unknown; but in Defoe's day, when means of communication were scarce, bad, and costly, an inventive writer had far more scope. Hence it is that 'Defoe always wrote what a large number of people were in a mood to read,' as Professor Minto points out. 'All his writings, with so few exceptions that they may reasonably be supposed to fall within that category, were *pièces des circonstance*. Whenever any distinguished person died or otherwise engaged public attention, no matter how distinguished, whether as a politician, a criminal, or a divine, Defoe lost no time in bringing out a biography. It was in such emergencies that he produced his "Memoirs of Charles XII.," "Peter the Great," . . . "Captain Avery, the King of the Pirates," "Dominique Cartouche," "Rob Roy," "Jonathan Wild," "Jack Shepherd," "Duncan Campbell." . . . We owe the "Journal of the Plague in 1665" [1722] to a visitation which fell upon France in 1721, and caused much apprehension in England. The germ which in his fertile mind grew into "Robinson Crusoe" [1719] fell from the real adventures of Alexander Selkirk, whose solitary residence of four years on the island of Juan Fernandez was a nine days' wonder in the reign of Queen Anne. Defoe was too busy with his politics at that moment to turn it to account; it was recalled to him later on, in the year 1719, when the exploits of famous pirates had given a vivid interest to the chances of adventures in far-away islands on the American and African coasts. "The Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the famous Captain Singleton" [1720], who was set on shore in Madagascar, traversed the continent of Africa from east to west, past the sources of the Nile, and went roving again in the company of the famous Captain Avery, was produced to satisfy the same demand. Such biographies as those of "Moll Flanders" [1722] and "Lady Roxana" [1724] were of a kind . . . that interested all times, and all professions and degrees; but we have seen to what

accident he owed their suggestion, and probably part of their materials.'<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely to the fact that Defoe's stories were meant to be passed off as true relations of actual events that they owe one of their most characteristic excellences. Defoe was forbidden by the nature of the case to be *unreal*. He might invent as much as he liked, but he was bound to make his narrative absolutely credible. Professed prose fiction up to his day had been bombastic, telling of impossible adventures and exaggerated passions in inflated and rhetorical language. All this was as much forbidden to Defoe for the success of his work as it seems to have been foreign to his nature. He is the first of our great novelists, because he is the first prose-writer of genius who made his characters live and take part in actions that impress us as real.

To give the reader any idea of the contents of Defoe's chief novels is not very easy ; it is fortunately, however, the less necessary, because one which is acknowledged to be among the best—'Robinson Crusoe'—is universally known. Everybody has read the story of the shipwrecked man on his desert island, though the 'Farther Adventures,' with 'The Serious Reflections' are less familiar. 'Captain Singleton' has already been touched on. From 'Colonel Jack' we select our specimen of Defoe's style :—

'I had here now a most happy and comfortable retreat, though it was a kind of an exile ; here I enjoyed everything I could think of that was agreeable and pleasant, except only a liberty of going home, which, for that reason perhaps, was the only thing I desired in the world ; for the grief of one absent comfort is oftentimes capable of embittering all the other enjoyments in the world.'

'Here I enjoyed the moments which I had never before known how to employ ; I mean, that here I learned to look upon a long, ill-spent life, blessed with infinite advantage, which I had no heart given me till now to make use of, and here I found just reflections were the utmost felicity of human life.'

'Here I wrote these memoirs, having to add to the pleasure of looking back with due reflections, the benefit of a violent fit of the

<sup>1</sup> He had tested the market for such wares in his *Journals of Society*. . . . The raw materials of several of his elaborate tales, such as 'Moll Flanders' and 'Colonel Jack,' are to be found in the columns of 'Mist's' and 'Applebee's.'—PROFESSOR MINTO.

gout, which, as it is allowed by most people, clears the head, restores the memory, and qualifies us to make the most, and just, and useful remarks upon our own actions.

'Perhaps, when I wrote these things down, I did not foresee that *the writings of our own stories would be so much the fashion in England, or so agreeable to others to read, as I find custom and the humour of the times has caused it to be*; if any one that reads my story pleases to make the same just reflections, which I acknowledge I ought to have made, he will reap the benefit of my misfortunes, perhaps more than I have done myself. It is evident by the long series of changes and turns which have appeared in the narrow compass of one private, mean person's life, that the history of men's lives may be many ways made useful and instructive to those who read them, if moral and religious improvement and reflections are made by those that write them.'

Of Defoe's power as an artist a few words must be said. He excels in vivid narrative, in which, as we have pointed out, the reader is constantly and unconsciously impressed with the reality of the story, as much by the obvious truth of the details as by the ingenuous, unornate way in which the characters make their statements. Defoe's language is simple, clear, and direct; he is never rhetorical or declamatory; he is always circumstantial and terse. Description as an ornament he does not indulge in; but of the kind of description that is necessary for the purpose of making the reader understand his characters' situations he is a master. He does not deal with complex or subtle emotions, or with involved and complicated occurrences; simplicity is the characteristic of his episodes, his personages, and his style. For his satire and powers of humorous controversy we must look in his pamphlets. The grossness of which he is sometimes accused is not worse than that of most other writers of the day. He often describes coarse incidents, and he uses appropriate language; but he does not seem to go out of his way to introduce unnecessary dirtiness. In each of his novels the 'moral' is sound; vice is made to bring its own punishment to the vicious. This is often exhibited in a rough, coarse kind of way; but refinement of feeling is the last thing to be found in Defoe's books, and that is perhaps why he is often characterised as 'prosaic.' Certainly he was a victorious adventurer in a new region of prose.

It is only as a matter of convenience we group the great Jonathan Swift, English master of irony in the chapter which 1667—1745. deals with fiction; there is, however, this much justification for so doing, that the best known and, all things considered, the greatest of his works is a work of imagination in prose. The larger part of his writings however is 'occasional'; for like Defoe he was a busy journalist and political pamphleteer.

Swift was born of English parents in Dublin, after the death of his father, which event had left his mother in poverty. By the help of his uncles he was educated at Kilkenny and Dublin University, where he took no honours, receiving his degree by 'special grace' (*i.e.*, by act of condescension on the part of the University). In 1686 Swift came to England, and was received as a sort of literary companion and secretary into the house of Sir William Temple, where he met Hester Johnson (Stella), then a child under Temple's guardianship. It was here that Swift seems first to have been attacked by that strange disorder which he himself in after-life was wont to declare was brought on by eating too much unripe fruit. Here, too, King William, when on a visit to Temple, is said to have offered to give him a commission in the army. Swift left Temple to take orders, but returned again to him, and stayed in his household till Temple's death (1699), and subsequently edited his 'Remains.' In 1700 he received a small Irish living (Laracor), where he went to reside, and was soon followed by Hester Johnson and her friend Miss Dingley. After many occasional visits to London, he was intrusted by the Irish Bishops with a commission to the Court of Queen Anne, and it was then (1710) he commenced the 'Journal to Stella,' which ends in 1713 with his return to Ireland as Dean of St. Patrick's. We shall see that his first political writings were on the Whig side. We may note here that his connection with the other party dates from his mission to England.

One of Swift's earliest writings is connected with his patron, Sir William Temple. This arose out of the 'Epistles of Phalaris' controversy, and was entitled 'The Battle of the Books.' In this 'skit,' written about 1697 (and

published 1704), Swift naturally espoused the cause of Temple and the Ancients against Bentley and the Moderns. About the same time, too (or possibly somewhat earlier), he wrote 'The Tale of a Tub,' which, however, did not appear till some years later, and was never published with its author's name during his lifetime. This satire, 'written for the universal improvement of mankind,' deals with the doings of three sons, Peter (Roman Catholicism), Martin (Church of England), and Jack (Dissent), and the way in which they carry out their father's will. Swift's intention was doubtless to champion the Church of England; but the irreverent way in which he handles things supposed to be sacred is said to have retarded, and in some ways altogether stopped, his preferment.

The first of Swift's writings to be published was a political tract, written in the Whig interest, in the year 1701, entitled 'A Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions between the Nobles and Commoners in Athens and Rome.' Swift's next writings belong to the year 1708, when he wrote 'The Sentiments of a Church of England Man in respect to Religion and Government' (one of his few productions which are neither ironical nor bitterly partisan), and 'An Argument against the Abolition of Christianity,' in which he treats with the utmost mock-seriousness of the inconveniences that would arise from such a course. This was followed next year by 'A Project for the Advancement of Religion,' purporting to be by a 'person of quality,' in which Swift's scorn of the world (as he shows it us even more plainly later on in 'Gulliver') is more conspicuous than his desire to amend it. Satire of lighter kind distinguishes 'The Predictions for the Year 1708,' where Swift, under the name of 'Isaac Bickerstaff,' gravely prophesies the events of the year to come. His mockery is directed against the 'Astrologic Almanac' makers in general, and one Partridge in particular, who was destined (according to Bickerstaff) to die on March 29th, 1708. Accordingly, after that day, Swift promptly published 'An Account of the Death of the unfortunate Partridge,' who protested in vain that he was alive, only to have it gravely demonstrated to him in 'A Vindication of Isaac

Bickerstaff' (1709), that there was certainly every reason for his non-existence.

From his mission to London (1710-13) dates Swift's friendship with Harley and Bolingbroke, and his appearance as the literary champion of the Tories. To the same period belongs his 'Journal to Stella,' which latter is a series of letters to Hester Johnson (never meant to be published, of course), in which the writer describes the events of his daily life, little and big; the statesmen and men of letters of the day; his mode of existence, his expectations and doings. Among the latter was the re-establishment of the *Examiner*<sup>1</sup> as a semi-official Tory organ, and the writing of a large amount of political pamphlets. Two of these, 'The Conduct of the Allies' (1711), with its sequel, 'Reflections on the Barrier Treaty' (1712), and 'The Public Spirit of the Whigs'<sup>2</sup> (1714), created a sensation on their appearance. 'The purpose' (of the 'Conduct') 'was,' says Johnson, 'to persuade the nation to peace; and never had any writer more success. The people, who had been amused with bonfires and triumphal processions, and looked with idolatry on the General and his friends—who, as they thought, had made England the arbitress of nations—were confounded between shame and rage when they found that "armies had been exhausted and millions destroyed" to secure the Dutch or aggrandise the Emperor, without any advantage to ourselves; that we had been bribing our neighbours to fight their own quarrel; and that among our enemies we might number our allies.' The success of this pamphlet was tremendous; and 'Swift now attained the zenith of his political importance,' which was not weakened by the fact that his reply to Steele's 'Crisis' (for which latter, Steele was expelled the House of Commons by the Tory majority) so irritated the Lords 'that some of them,' says Johnson, 'demanded an audience of the Queen, and solicited reparation. A proclamation was issued, in which three hundred pounds were offered for the discovery of the author. From this storm he was,' as he relates, '"secured by a sleight," of what kind is not known,' though doubtless it

<sup>1</sup> November, 1710. Addison's *Whig Examiner* had come to an end a month before.

<sup>2</sup> In answer to Steele's pamphlet, 'The Crisis.'

was owing to the protection of his powerful friends in the Ministry, for though the pamphlet was anonymous (like most of Swift's writings), the author was well known.<sup>1</sup> In the year of this 'storm,' however, Queen Anne died, the Tories were utterly routed, and Swift retired to his deanery (of St. Patrick's, Dublin), which had been conferred on him in 1713. We may here observe that, though his better-known works ('The Drapier Letters' and 'Gulliver') belong to a later date, all the characteristics of his genius —his lucid, clear style, his occasional outbursts of eloquence, his savage contempt of shams (and almost of all mankind as the embodiment of them), his grave irony, his bitter satire, his originality, and his admirable power of stating his arguments and combating his adversaries'— are as clearly shown in his writings before 1714 (e.g., 'The Battle of the Books,' 'The Tale of a Tub'—in some respects the best written of all his works—'The Arguments against the Abolition of Christianity,' 'The Conduct of the Allies,' etc.) as in those after it; while his horrible manner of dealing with horrible subjects, and his diseased liking for treating of obscene things, had not as yet found vent—at least, in print.

In Ireland Swift spent most of his remaining years after 1714, visiting England occasionally and keeping up his friendship with Pope, Bolingbroke, Arbuthnot, etc. He was married privately in 1716 to Hester Johnson, the 'Stella' to whom his journal was written. The ill-fated Esther Vanhomrigh (the 'Vanessa' of his poem 'Cadenus and Vanessa') died after following him to Ireland in 1723—of a broken heart, it is said. He himself gradually lost his reason towards the close of his life. Besides some verses, not of any great value, his chief works after his return to Ireland are the 'Drapier's Letters' and 'Gulliver's Travels' (1726-27).

The former of these were written in 1724, under the name of 'M. B., Drapier,' to rouse the indignation of Ireland on the grant of a patent for coining halfpence granted to an Englishman named Wood. These halfpence were not in reality the debased coins Swift declared them to be, but Swift was able to provoke such indignation as to cause the

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<sup>1</sup> The printer was summoned before the House of Lords, and committed to prison.

patent to be withdrawn. The ‘Drapier’s Letters’ raised him to the height of the popular esteem and affection. He was honoured by the populace as the champion, patron, and instructor of Ireland; and gained such power as, considered both in its extent and duration, scarcely any man has ever enjoyed without greater wealth or higher station.

‘Gulliver’s Travels,’ the most famous of Swift’s writings, is, like Defoe’s ‘Robinson Crusoe,’ a record of imaginary lands; but, unlike that book, deals with miraculous peoples, and is a satire.

The plan of ‘Gulliver’ is as follows: Mr. Lemuel Gulliver, a ship’s surgeon, ‘set sail from Bristol, May 4th, 1699,’ for the East Indies; the ship was wrecked ‘in the latitude of 30 degrees 2 minutes south,’ but Gulliver was cast up by the sea on an unknown shore. This was the kingdom of Lilliput, whose little inhabitants take Gulliver captive. Swift describes the life of these tiny people—their quarrels with their neighbours of Blefuscu, the court life, their factions, and so forth. The manner of his satire may be gathered from the following ironical description of the causes for the ‘obstinate war’ between ‘the great empires’ Blefuscu (France) and Lilliput (England):

‘It began upon the following fashion. It is allowed on all hands that the primitive way of breaking eggs before we eat them was upon the larger end; but his present majesty’s grandfather, while he was a boy, going to eat an egg, and breaking it according to the ancient practice, happened to cut one of his fingers, whereupon the emperor, his father, published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon great penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs. The people so highly resented this law that our histories tell us there have been six rebellions raised on that account; wherein one emperor lost his life and another his crown. These civil commotions were constantly fomented by the monarchs of Blefuscu; and when they were quelled, the exiles always fled for refuge to that empire. It is computed that eleven thousand persons have at several times suffered death rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end. Many hundred large volumes have been published upon this controversy; but the books of the Big-endians have been long forbidden, and the whole party rendered incapable by law of holding employments. During the course of these troubles the emperors of Blefuscu did frequently expostulate by their ambassadors, accusing us of making a schism in religion by offending against a fundamental doctrine of our great prophet Lustrog, in the fifty-fourth chapter of the Blundecral (which is their Alcoran). This, however, is thought to be a mere strain upon the text; for the words

are these : That all believers shall break their eggs at the convenient end ; and which is the convenient end seems, in my humble opinion, to be left to every man's conscience, or at least in the power of the chief magistrate to determine.'

The second section of the book is written in the same vein, but now Lemuel, having escaped from Lilliput, is stranded in Brobdingnag, a country whose inhabitants were as much above him as the Lilliputians were below him. Gulliver, when questioned about his native land, describes it in the most glowing terms, but in cross-examination is compelled, much against his will, to expose to the giant king the defects Swift saw in the civilized governments of his time. 'It doth not appear, from all you have said,' remarks his majesty,

'how any one virtue is required towards the procurement of any one station among you ; much less that men were ennobled on account of their virtue ; that priests were advanced for their piety or learning ; soldiers for their conduct or valour ; judges for their integrity ; senators for the love of their country ; or councillors for their wisdom. As for yourself,' continued the king, 'who have spent the greatest part of your life in travelling, I am well disposed to hope you may hitherto have escaped many vices of your country. But by what I have gathered from your own relation, and the answers I have with much pains wringed and extorted from you, I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.'

These words seem to contain Swift's candid opinion of his fellow-men, but it does not find its fullest (and foulest) expression till the last part of the work : in Lilliput and in Brobdingnag, and in Laputa,<sup>1</sup> which he next visits, his text is rather Puck's 'Lord, what fools these mortals be !' They are horrible and obscene creatures of night in the fourth part, which describes the country of the Houyhnhnms. These unpronounceable beings are a noble equine race who do well to regard with loathing and treat with ignominy the degraded Yahoos, under which name Swift presents to us his horrible ideas of mankind.

It is said that the madness which fell upon Swift's last

<sup>1</sup> In this part of the book the most amusing portion deals with Gulliver's visit to the academy of philosophers in the flying island : it is there that he sees one 'projector' endeavouring to extract sunbeams from cucumbers, another trying to calcine ice into gunpowder, a third contriving a plan for building houses from the roof downwards. In this book, too, he describes the unhappy Struldbruga.

years was already at work upon his mind when he wrote this blackest part of his work, and it is pointed out that it may have been written during Stella's last illness, about which time his biographer says the giddiness from which he had before suffered became chronic. But however this may be, it is impossible to avoid seeing that Swift had a genuine hatred and scorn of the human race, which—with the exception of a very few personal friends—he seems to have regarded as a collection of interesting but noisome objects ; nor can we forget that he evidently had a liking—a diseased liking it may well be—for the disgusting, which made him well inclined to deal with the objects of his scorn in a revolting way. His unrivalled power of irony, his lucid method of description, and his passionate loathing of his kind, combined to produce a work which, as a satire on man, has never been approached in our literature. He says himself that he

‘Had too much satire in his vein,  
And seemed determined not to starve it,  
Because no age could more deserve it.  
Yet malice never was his aim ;  
He lashed the vice, but spared the name.’<sup>1</sup>

It is true that he did not, like his friend Pope, single out particular foes for attack : his enemy is the whole race ; the vice of being human was the one which he lashed.

A very different temperament was that of a young man <sup>Henry Fielding</sup> who about this time was eking out his allowance <sub>1707-1754.</sub> by writing plays for the theatres. Henry Fielding, whose first play, ‘Love in Several Masques,’ was acted in 1728, was of a healthy, vigorous temperament, with a keen love of enjoyment, a fine sense of humour and a deep and broad sympathy with—and understanding of—that poor human nature which seemed to Swift nothing but corruption. Fielding was of good family, and had been well educated at Eton and at Leyden. He came to London at the age of twenty, and at once ‘turned author’; during the next twelve years he wrote a large number of plays, appeared for awhile as a player himself, and contributed to periodicals.

<sup>1</sup> In some verses which he wrote ‘On the Death of Dr. Swift’: see p. 412.

His first notable work was published in 1742 : this was 'Joseph Andrews.' In 1748 Fielding was made a stipendiary magistrate. Next year appeared his greatest novel—perhaps the greatest that has ever been written—'Tom Jones.' Then came (in 1751) 'Amelia.' In this last he has drawn the character of his heroine from his first wife, whom he married in 1735, and who had died in 1743. Fielding's last work was his 'Voyage to Lisbon': he had gone abroad in 1754 on a vain endeavour to stave off his approaching death.

In 1740 Richardson's 'Pamela' had been published ; as it was to this that the 'Adventures of Joseph Andrews' owe their origin, we will give some account of it here. Richardson's 'Pamela' is a country girl, who withstands the temptations of her young and wealthy master, 'Mr. B.', and has her reward—the sub-title of the book is 'Virtue Rewarded'—after many trials and tribulations, in marriage with her persecutor. The vulgar *dénouement* which united the immaculate heroine with the blackguardly gentleman, and the satisfaction with which this 'reward' is received by Pamela Andrews herself, as well as by her parents, undoubtedly jarred on Fielding's more delicate notions as much as the manner of writing seems to have amused him. Accordingly he produced a brother to Pamela, one Joseph, who is a footman to a lady. She becomes enamoured of him, and persecutes him with her attentions. Joseph, however, is not to be beguiled by them, and it is in a spirit of frank burlesque of 'Pamela' and 'Mr. B.' that the beginning of the book is written. This is not the tone of the whole, however: Fielding becomes interested in his characters, and the caricature is soon dropped. The novel is humorous throughout, it is true, but the characters are vividly real : famous among these is the good Parson Adams, the companion and friend of Joseph.

The quality of humour so conspicuous in 'Joseph Andrews' shines through all the pages of the greater successor 'Tom Jones'; but it is the construction of the novel which has excited more particularly the admiration of the critics. The plot is briefly as follows: Squire Allworthy (whose name describes his character) brings up, as if they were his sons, the child of his sister Bridget, who had married

a Captain Blifil, and the foundling Tom Jones. The education of the two boys, under Parson Thwackum and Philosopher Square, the life of the good Squire, his sour sister and his barbarian neighbour, Squire Western, are described by the hand of an artist who, as a delineator of men and manners, has never been surpassed. The two boys are of diametrically opposite characters—Blifil, hypocritical, ungenerous and wary; Tom, warm-hearted, quick-tempered and unsuspecting. He falls into many errors, but we are meant to see that they are such as a hot-blooded youth, in fine health and in the first enjoyment of life, might easily commit; his nature is not depraved, and although he sins, he is always ready to repent, and to atone as far as he can. Through Blifil's well-laid plots and Tom's own folly, the latter is disowned by Squire Allworthy; but in the end, after many adventures—in which in one instance at least it is impossible to avoid regarding Tom as one of the meanest of rascals—Blifil is exposed, and Tom is triumphant, receiving the hand of the charming Sophia Western, the heroine, from whose affections Blifil had in vain tried to oust him. No doubt Tom as little deserves the pure and affectionate Sophia as Mr. B. does Pamela—or for that matter Pamela does Mr. B.—but the reader loves Fielding's hero, and sympathizes more with him than with Richardson's creations, and is consequently not shocked in the one case as the other.

Fielding, in the introduction to '*Tom Jones*'—the dedication to Lord Lyttelton, his kind friend—thus sets forth the aim of this book of his, 'the labours of some years':

'... I declare that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history. This honest purpose you have been pleased to think I have attained; and, to say the truth, it is likeliest to be attained in books of this kind; for an example is a kind of picture, in which Virtue becomes as it were an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of that loveliness which Pluto asserts there is in her naked charms.'

\* 'Besides displaying that beauty of Virtue which may attract the admiration of mankind, I have attempted to engage a stronger motive to human action in her favour, by convincing men that their true interest directs them to a pursuit of her. For this purpose I have shown that no acquisitions of guilt can compensate the loss of that solid inward comfort of mind which is the sure companion of innocence and virtue; nor can in the least balance the evil of that horror and anxiety

which, in their room, guilt introduces into our bosoms. And again, that as these acquisitions are in themselves generally worthless, so are the means to attain them not only base and infamous, but at best uncertain, and always full of danger. Lastly, I have endeavoured strongly to inculcate that virtue and innocence can scarce ever be injured but by indiscretion ; and that it is this alone which often betrays them into the snares that deceit and villainy spread for them. A moral which I have the more industriously laboured, as the teaching it is, of all others, likeliest to be attended with success ; since I believe it is much easier to make good men wise than to make bad men good.

'For these purposes I have employed all the wit and humour of which I am master in the following history ; wherein I have endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices.'

'As a picture of manners,' says one of the greatest of nineteenth-century novelists, who himself learned much from Fielding, 'the novel of "Tom Jones" is indeed exquisite ; as a work of construction quite a wonder : the by-play of wisdom, the power of observation, the multiplied felicitous terms and thoughts, the varied character of the great Comic Epic keep the reader in a perpetual admiration and curiosity. . . . What a wonderful art !' continues Thackeray, 'what an admirable gift of nature was it with which the author of these tales was endowed, and which enabled him to fix our interest, to waken our sympathy, to seize upon our credulity, so that we believe in his people—speculate gravely upon their faults or their excellences, prefer this one or that, deplore Jones's fondness for drink and play, Booth's<sup>1</sup> fondness for play and drink, and the unfortunate position of the wives of both gentlemen—love and admire those ladies with all our hearts, and talk about them as faithfully as if we had breakfasted with them this afternoon in their actual drawing-rooms, or should meet them this afternoon in the Park ! What a genius ! what a vigour ! what a bright-eyed intelligence and observation ! what a wholesome hatred for meanness and knavery ! what a vast sympathy ! what a cheerfulness ! what a manly relish of life ! what a love of human kind ! what a poet is here !—watching, meditating, brooding, creating ! What multitudes of truths has that man left behind him ! What generations he has taught to laugh wisely and fairly ! What scholars he has formed and accustomed to the exercise

<sup>1</sup> Under which name Fielding has drawn his own portrait in 'Amelia,' the heroine of the novel being his first wife.

of thoughtful humour and the manly play of wit ! What a courage he had ! what a dauntless and constant cheerfulness of intellect, that burned bright and steady through all the storms of his life, and never deserted its last wreck ! It is wonderful to think of the pains and misery which the man suffered ; the pressure of want, illness, remorse which he endured ; and that the writer was neither malignant nor melancholy, his view of truth never warped, and his generous human kindness never surrendered.'

Richardson's first novel gave rise to his great contemporaneous effort in the same direction ; but while the career in literature of the author of '*Pamela*' practically began with that book, the other (although a much younger man) had long been, as we have seen, writing for his living. While Fielding was producing farces and squibs, 'having no choice,' as he said himself, 'but to be a hackney writer or a hackney coachman,' Richardson was pursuing the less exciting, but more profitable, calling of a printer. He was over fifty when his first novel appeared, and its composition was not due to any wish, in the first place, to shine in literature. Richardson from his boyhood—he was the son of a Derbyshire carpenter—loved writing letters, and he tells us that in his early years, the village girls used to get him to write letters to their sweethearts for them ; it is probably partly to this that he owes the intimate acquaintance with the female heart that his books display. It is evident that he was always a close observer of the relations between the sexes—practically the only subject his books deal with—and that he loved to analyze the emotions connected with tenderness and passion, and to moralize about them. To preach, indeed, he seems to have considered his main duty in literature, and thus arose '*Pamela*' for having undertaken to write a sort of '*Polite Letterwriter*,' as it is called nowadays, a series of model epistles, as a guide to uneducated persons in their correspondence, devised with the double plan of teaching what they ought to say and how they ought to say it, he was struck by the fact that a story of real life and its temptations, told in a series of letters, might be both instructive and entertaining to young girls going out to service, and to other young people. It is

interesting to consider that Richardson's first novel was meant for the instruction of a class a good deal more illiterate than that which now reads the *Family Herald*. His contempt, indeed, for the idea of merely writing a book to entertain is clearly expressed in a letter he writes to one of his numerous lady admirers, to whom he sends the last volumes of 'Clarissa': he trusts that they may be allowed a place among her favourite works of devotion, for 'they appear in the humble guise of novel,' he says, 'only by way of accommodation to the manners and taste of an age overwhelmed with luxury, and abandoned to sound and soundlessness.'

Some account of 'Pamela' we have already given in discussing Fielding's 'Joseph Andrews.' 'Clarissa,' the work which entitles Richardson to a place among our classics—perhaps among the world's classics—was finished in 1748. The 'plot' is simplicity itself; the heroine, Clarissa Harlowe, persecuted by her family because she refuses to marry an odious suitor, is driven, or rather tricked, into accepting the protection of her assiduous wooer, Lovelace: he, after many vain attempts to induce her to consent to his wishes, at last, after submitting her to many indignities, causes her to be 'first robbed of her senses and then of her honour.' Clarissa dies, after refusing to marry the now remorseful villain who has so basely used her, and Lovelace himself is killed in a duel by his victim's cousin. The book is immensely big, the story is narrated in stupendously long letters between the chief characters, and Richardson has no title to rank as a stylist. Yet that it entitles him to be ranked as a great genius there cannot be a doubt; the interest one takes in the characters begins with their introduction, and grows upon one as one reads; we can quite understand the feelings that urged Richardson's feminine friends to beg him to give it a happy ending; for we get so to know and love the sweet, sprightly, intensely feminine Clarissa that we feel for her sufferings as if they were actually going on. Richardson is not often ranked high as a humorist, but the delightful half-conscious malice Clarissa displays towards her sister Bella, the way in which she acts towards and speaks of Solmes, the detestable husband chosen for her, and the character of Miss Anna Howe, her confidante, show him to have had a keen

sense of humour. Towards the conclusion of 'Clarissa' he has reached a conception of the sublime which certainly the reader of 'Pamela' would not have suspected in him. His fair readers were angry with him, however, and he has to justify himself for making them weep so bitterly.<sup>1</sup> To let Lovelace marry Clarissa, after his reform, would be an encouragement to the rake to 'pass the flower and prime of his youth in forming and pursuing the most insidious enterprises,' till at last he meets a Clarissa, with whom all his arts avail him nothing, and to whom he at last 'graciously extends his hand.' As for Clarissa's position, we have but to look at the letter she left to be given to Lovelace after her death. Here are two paragraphs from it :

'I repeat, therefore, that I do forgive you ; and may the Almighty forgive you too ! Nor have I, at the writing of this, any other essential regrets than what are occasioned by the grief I have given to parents, who till I knew you were the most indulgent of parents ; by the scandal given to other branches of my family ; by the disreputation brought upon my sex ; and by the offence given to virtue in my fall.'

'As to myself, you have only robbed me of what once were my favourite expectations in the transient life I shall have quitted when you receive this. You have only been the cause that I have been cut off in the bloom of youth, and of curtailing a life that might have been agreeable to myself, or otherwise, as had suited the designs and ends of Providence. I have reason to be thankful for being taken away from the evil of supporting my part of a yoke with a man so unhappy ; I will only say that in all probability every hour I had lived with him might have brought with it some new trouble. And I am (indeed through sharp afflictions and distresses) indebted to you secondarily, as I humbly presume to hope, for so many years of glory as might have proved years of danger, temptation, and anguish, had they been added to my mortal life.'

The third and last of Richardson's novels is 'Sir Charles Grandison' (1753); in this book the hero, who gives his name to the novel, is a terribly faultless person, who is intended to represent the ideal of perfect manhood ; the heroine—or rather one of the heroines—the insipid but estimable Harriet Byron, is rewarded with his hand. This is certainly the least successful of Richardson's novels.

Some sort of comparison or contrast between Richardson and his great contemporary novelist, who ridiculed him and

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<sup>1</sup> Over Lovelace, rather than Clarissa, apparently.

whom he heartily disliked, is almost inevitable. In their own day, to appreciate one was to deprecate the other, and something of the same spirit has lasted. Richardson, as we saw, set up a purpose strongly before him in each of his works, and Fielding was one of those authors of whose books he deprecates the immoral effect ; yet, curiously enough, it is the author of 'Clarissa' whose books are generally allowed to have a more harmful tendency than the author of 'Tom Jones': as Coleridge says, 'There is a cheerful, sunshiny, breezy spirit that prevails everywhere [in Fielding], strongly contrasted with the close, hot, day-dreamy continuity of Richardson.' As far as regards the matter of their compositions, each of them seems little indebted to any predecessor : both drew on their experience, observation, and imagination. In Richardson we have none of that fine constructive art that his rival exhibits ; nor, as we have said, can he, as a mere writer, for a moment be compared to Fielding. Yet Richardson's elaborate piece-by-piece method, his calm page-long description of trivial detail, his simple devices of inserting letter within letter to make us thoroughly *au courant* with the story, all unite to produce a result utterly beyond praise. He must certainly be called a great artist, for he deliberately aims at getting certain effects, and does get them ; yet the methods he uses are such as no artist before or since has ever succeeded with. If you read a page of Fielding, you are impressed, by the fact that the author is a scholar and a gentleman, a true artist and a man of vigorous, generous mind ; if you read only so much of Richardson, you will probably think that he is a slipshod writer and a dull one ; yet the chances are you will still want to go on reading him.

In 1748, the same year as Richardson's 'Clarissa' and <sup>Tobias</sup> the year before Fielding's 'Tom Jones,' appeared Smollett: Smollett's 'Roderick Random.' A much younger <sup>1721-1771.</sup> man than his two greater fellow-novelists, Smollett turned to novel-writing just when the public was beginning eagerly to read that kind of composition. Smollett was born in Dumbartonshire (1721) and, after being educated at Glasgow, was apprenticed to a doctor there ; at the age of nineteen he came to London with a tragedy—'The Regicide' —in his pocket, and very little else. Unable to get his play

acted, or to support himself by writing, he took a place as ship's surgeon. He was at sea for six or seven years; witnessed the siege of Cartagena (1741), which he afterwards described in 'Roderick Random,' and got that acquaintance with seafaring men and their ways which he displays there and in 'Peregrine Pickle.' Leaving the sea, he reached England in 1746, and wrote 'The Tears of Scotland' (a poem on the cruel treatment of the Highlanders after the '45). He also tried his hand at an opera, a satire or two, and other literary manufacture. In 1747 he married, and, being both poor and extravagant, was forced to take to writing as a trade. Next year his 'Roderick Random' was published. 'It brought him in,' says his biographer, 'both fame and emolument.' 'Peregrine Pickle' followed in 1751; then, after an interval in which he endeavoured to practise as a doctor in London, came 'The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom' (1753). His last and pleasantest novel was 'Humphry Clinker,' written at Leghorn, where he died in 1771, the year of its publication. In the interval between the last two he was engaged on a variety of miscellaneous literary work, translating 'Don Quixote,' compiling a 'Compendium of Voyages,' histories of England, France, Italy, etc., contributing to the journals—he was imprisoned for three months and fined for a libel in the *Critical Review*, during which time he wrote the 'Adventures of Sir Lancelot Greaves'—editing a weekly paper.<sup>1</sup> Among his verse, his 'Ode to Independence' is his best performance.

'Roderick Random' (like Smollett's other novels) is to a large extent autobiographical. 'He did not invent much, as I fancy,' says Thackeray, 'but had the keenest perceptive faculty, and described what he saw with wonderful relish and delightful broad humour.' Perhaps the humour may seem to many a good deal more broad than delightful. Smollett is one of the coarsest of writers, and so much of his humour is in connection with brutal or revolting practical jokes, that it is apt to be more disgusting than amusing. In 'Roderick Random' the 'hero' is sent on a series of ad-

<sup>1</sup> *The Briton*, in support of Lord Bute, in opposition to which Wilkes' *North Briton* was started.

ventures resembling the author's way through the world ; he is a Scotch lad who, ill-used by his relatives and barbarously treated by his tutor, is aided to some extent by his good old sailor uncle, Bowling. Roderick gets some university education, picks up a knowledge of physic, and sets out on his way through the world with his school-fellow and humble admirer, Strap. The book is taken up with records of adventures of all kinds, in which, as a rule, Roderick is the central figure.

'Humphry Clinker' is a book of a much humarer kind. The story is told in a series of letters<sup>1</sup> written on a tour through Scotland and England by the various characters ; the chief of these are Matthew Bramble, a kind-hearted old fellow travelling for his health, his niece, Lydia Melford, and her brother, his sour sister Tabitha, Humphry Clinker and Winifred Jenkins, the maid, whose religious feelings and spelling are equally admirable. Humphry is a postilion who is taken into Bramble's service ; he is a pious follower of the teachings of the Wesleys, and is the means of converting Winifred, whom he finally marries ; he turns out to be the son of old Bramble.

<sup>1</sup> Richardson, as we have seen, had told all his stories in the epistolary form. But 'the very ingenious scheme of describing the various effects produced upon different members of the same family by the same objects had been employed,' says Scott, 'by Anstey, the facetious author of "The New Bath Guide" . . . six or seven years before "Humphry Clinker" appeared. But Anstey's diverting satire was but a slight sketch compared with the finished and elaborate manner in which Smollett has in the first place identified his characters, and then filled them with language, sentiments, and powers of observation, in exact correspondence with their talents, temper, condition and disposition.'—The 'New Bath Guide,' by Christopher Anstey (1724-1806), was a set of letters in verse (1766).

## CHAPTER XXXII

### EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FICTION : STERNE — GOLDSMITH— MINOR NOVELISTS.

STERNE had reached middle age at the time when the first two volumes of 'Tristram Shandy' appeared in 1759. The son of a moneyless ensign, he was adopted by a prosperous uncle, who had him educated, sending him to Cambridge at the age of nineteen. He took orders in 1736, and was two years afterwards given a small living in Yorkshire. His marriage in 1743 brought him further preferment, and he was in fairly comfortable circumstances when he published his first work at York. The success with which it met induced him to come to London, to republish his book there, and to receive the applause of the fashionable world. 'Tristram Shandy' grew to nine volumes before it was completed—or, rather, left off—in 1767, while the 'Sermons of Yorick' had sprung out of it in 1760. In 1765 Sterne visited France for the last time, and journeyed on to Rome, the result of this being the famous 'Sentimental Journey,' which appeared in 1768, three weeks before its writer's death.

To attempt to describe the 'plot' of 'Tristram Shandy' would be impossible, for one of the most striking features of the work is its entire lack of anything like plan or arrangement. The book nominally deals with the 'life and opinions of Tristram Shandy,' but it is made up of ludicrous incidents, of grotesque digressions and moralisings, and of anything else that affords room for Sterne's humour and sentimentality. Apart from his gifts as a humorist (often exercised in Rabelais fashion *plus* a taint of prurience of Sterne's own), the great charm of the book lies in the masterly delineation

of the characters—Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, the widow Wadman and the rest—that he creates, and in the interest of separate episodes. In the ‘Sentimental Journey’ there is, of course, no attempt at a story, it being a narrative of the incidents of travel of the writer, with suitable reflections thereon. The famous starling of the hotel at Paris is as good a specimen of Sterne’s sentimental vein as can be conveniently detached for insertion here:—

‘I was interrupted in the heyday of this soliloquy with a voice which I took to be that of a child, which complained “it could not get out.” I looked up and down the passage, and seeing neither man, woman, nor child, I went out without further attention.

‘In my return back through the passage I heard the same words repeated twice over; and looking up, I saw it was a starling hung in a little cage. “I can’t get out; I can’t get out,” said the starling.

‘I stood looking at the bird; and to every person who came through the passage it ran fluttering to the side towards which they approached it, with the same lamentation of its captivity: “I can’t get out,” said the starling. “God help thee,” said I; “but I’ll let thee out, cost what it will!” so I turned about the cage to get the door. It was twisted and double twisted so fast with wire there was no getting it open without pulling the cage to pieces. I took both hands to it.

‘The bird flew to the place where I was attempting his deliverance, and thrusting his head through the trellis, pressed his breast against it, as if impatient. “I fear, poor creature,” said I, “I cannot set thee at liberty.” “No,” said the starling; “I can’t get out; I can’t get out.”

‘I vow I never had my affections more tenderly awakened; nor do I remember an incident in my life where the dissipated spirits, to which my reason had been a bubble, were so suddenly called home. Mechanical as the notes were, yet so true in time to nature were they chanted, that in one moment they overthrew all my systematic reasonings upon the Bastille; and I heavily walked upstairs, unsaying every word I had said in going down them.

“Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, Slavery,” said I,—“still thou art a bitter draught; and, though thousands in all ages have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account. ‘Tis thou, thrice sweet and gracious goddess,” addressing myself to Liberty, “whom all in public or in private worship, whose taste is grateful, and ever will be so, till Nature herself will change. No tint of words can spot thy snowy mantle, nor chymic power turn thy sceptre into iron; with thee, to smile upon him as he eats his crust, the swain is happier than his monarch, from whose court thou art exiled. Gracious Heaven!” cried I, kneeling down upon the last step but one in my ascent, “grant me but health, thou great Bestower of it, and give me out this fair goddess as my companion,—and shower down thy mitres, if it seem good unto Thy Divine Providence, upon those heads which are aching for them!”

A fine example of Sterne's mingling of the humorous and pathetic is to be found in the 'Story of Lefevre' in 'Tristram Shandy,' from which we take the following lines :—

"In the second place," . . . continued my uncle Toby, "when thou offeredst him whatever was in my house, thou shouldst have offered him my house too. A sick brother officer should have the best quarters, Trim ; and if we had him with us we could tend and look to him. Thou art an excellent nurse thyself, Trim ; and what with thy care of him, and the old woman's, and his boy's, and mine together, we might recruit him again at once, and set him upon his legs. In a fortnight or three weeks," added my uncle Toby, smiling, "he might march."—"He will never march, an' please your Honour, in this world," said the Corporal.—"He *will* march," said my uncle Toby, rising up from the side of the bed with one shoe off.—"An' please your Honour," said the Corporal, "he will never march but to his grave."—"He *shall* march," cried my uncle Toby, marching the foot which had a shoe on, though without advancing an inch,—"he *shall* march to his regiment."—"He cannot stand it," said the Corporal — "He *shall* be supported," said my uncle Toby.—"He'll drop at last," said the Corporal, "and what will become of his boy ?"—"He *shall not* drop," said my uncle Toby firmly.—"Ah, well-a-day ! do what we can for him," said Trim maintaining his point, "the poor soul will die."—"He *shall not die*, by G——," cried my uncle Toby.

The Accusing Spirit, which flew up to Heaven's chancery with the oath, blushed as he gave it in ; and the Recording Angel, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.'

Of Goldsmith, as a poet and dramatist, we have already spoken. Before discussing him as a prose-writer <sup>Oliver</sup> Goldsmith : we may conveniently give an outline of his life. 1728—1774. He was born at Pallas (Longford, Ireland), of which his father, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, a Protestant of English extraction, was then pastor, obtaining the living of Lissoy a couple of years after his son's birth. It was there that Oliver received his youthful education from the village schoolmaster, and from his memory of his surroundings at Lissoy the poet drew many of the pictures we have found in 'The Deserted Village.' Goldsmith in due course went to Trinity College, Dublin—which he entered as a sizar—and managed to take his degree there in 1749. His father had died meanwhile, but his uncle Contarine and other friends supplied him with a little money, and he started to study medicine in Edinburgh, having previously

made unsuccessful attempts at the Church and the Law. Leaving Edinburgh, Goldsmith set out for the Continent, going to Leyden and thence through Holland, Switzerland and Italy. We see the fruits of his foreign travel in 'The Traveller.' In that poem he touches on his wanderings—probably not with literal accuracy—and he mentions how he often led the

‘Sportive choir

With tuneless pipe, beside the murmuring Loire ;  
Where shading elms along the margin grew,  
And, freshened from the wave, the zephyr flew ;  
And haply, though my harsh touch faltering still  
But mocked all tune, and marred the dancers' skill,  
Yet would the village praise my wondrous power.'

In 'The Vicar of Wakefield' he gives a chapter (xx.) entitled 'The History of a Philosophic Vagabond pursuing Novelty, but losing Content,' much of which is probably autobiographical. A quotation or two is interesting in connection with the author's life, and will serve to give some idea of his style; the student, however, must be warned against applying literally to an author's life every statement he may choose to make in the first person. Thus the Philosophic Vagabond describes his journeying from Louvain to Paris :

‘I was now too far from home to think of returning, so I resolved to go forward. I had some knowledge of music, with a tolerable voice; I now turned what was once my amusement into a present means of subsistence. I passed among the harmless peasants of Flanders, and among such of the French as were poor enough to be merry; for I ever found them sprightly in proportion to their wants. Whenever I approached a peasant's house towards nightfall I played one of my most merry tunes, and that procured me not only a lodging, but subsistence for the next day.’

Goldsmith came back from his travels as resourceless and as poor as he went. When he returned to London (1756) he was without money and without a profession, save that he had obtained—or is said to have obtained—the degree of M.D. at Padua. Under these circumstances he took to teaching, but this proved unsuitable to him. Thus he makes the Philosophic Vagabond's cousin describe the life of an usher :

‘“Ay,” cried he, “this is, indeed, a very pretty career that has been

chalked out for you. I have been an usher to a boarding-school myself, and may I die by an anodyne necklace, but I had rather be an underturnkey in Newgate. I was up early and late. I was browbeat by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys within, and never permitted to stir out to meet civility abroad. But are you sure you are fit for a school? Let me examine you a little. Have you been bred apprentice to the business?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Can you dress the boys' hair?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Have you had the small-pox?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Can you lie three in a bed?" "No." "Then you will never do for a school. Have you got a good stomach?" "Yes." "Then you will by no means do for a school. No, sir; if you are for a genteel, easy profession, bind yourself seven years as an apprentice to turn a cutler's wheel; but avoid a school by any means. Yet come," continued he, "I see you are a lad of spirit and some learning. What do you think of commencing author with me?"

'I resolved,' he says, 'to accept his proposal; and having the highest respect for literature, hailed the Antiqua Mater of Grub Street with reverence.'

Before Goldsmith took to writing as a means of support, he had tried to earn a living by medicine, working as an assistant to a City apothecary, and establishing himself in Southwark. He endeavoured subsequently to get an appointment as ship's surgeon and as medical officer in the East Indies, fortunately without success. Meanwhile he was managing to exist by correcting proofs for the great Mr. Richardson and by writing for periodicals. In 1757 he was receiving a regular salary from Griffiths, the owner of the *Monthly Review*, in return for devoting his pen entirely to that periodical. Quarrelling with Griffiths, he tried teaching and physic again, but drifted back into authorship before long. His first separate publication was 'An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe,' which appeared in 1759, and from that date onwards it is as a writer solely that we may regard Goldsmith. Later in this year appeared *The Bee*, a weekly magazine, consisting of essays, stories, etc., written solely by Goldsmith. This had a short life—there were only eight numbers—but its writer easily found work on other periodicals. To the 'Public Ledger' he contributed a series of letters in the character of a Chinaman visiting Europe; these were collected and augmented, being in some respects altered on their publication (in 1762) as 'The Citizen of the World.' In this delightful

series of essays, written with the object of letting us see ourselves as others (might) see us, appear the famous 'Man in Black' and the incomparable 'Beau Tibbs.' Goldsmith was now getting known as a man of letters, and his life from this time would have been fairly prosperous but for his carelessness and improvidence in money matters. He took chambers in Wine Office Court, and having made the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson in 1760—an acquaintance which ripened into the closest friendship—began to frequent the society of the most famous men of letters of his day. We see him now consorting with Johnson, Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, and the other members of the Literary Club, and we presently hear him praised as poet, as novelist, and as dramatist. His reputation in the first character was established immediately on the appearance of 'The Traveller' (1764), while his fame as a novelist was made by 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' which, though published in 1766, had been written (and paid for by the bookseller<sup>1</sup>) two years before. From the 'Vicar of Wakefield' extracts have already been given; it is a book, however, which no student of this period of our literature must omit to read for himself. A 'prose idyll' it was called by Goethe, who was enchanted with its charming simplicity, its poetic idealization of common life. "The Vicar of Wakefield," says Mr. Black, 'considered structurally, follows the Book of Job. You take a good man, overwhelm him with successive misfortunes, show the pure flame of his soul burning in the midst of the darkness, and then, as the reward of his patience, and fortitude, and submission, restore him gradually to happiness, with even larger flocks and herds than before. The machinery by which all this is brought about is in "The Vicar of Wakefield" the weak part of the story. The plot is full of wild improbabilities—in fact, the expedients by which all the members of the family are brought together and made happy at the same time are nothing short of desperate. It is quite clear, too, that the author does not know what to make of the episode

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<sup>1</sup> When Goldsmith was arrested for a debt he owed his landlady (1764), Johnson went to visit him, and learned that he had a novel written. 'I looked into and saw its merits; told the landlady I should soon return, and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds,' says Johnson.—(Boswell.)

of Olivia and her husband; they are allowed to drop through. We leave him playing the French horn at a relation's house, while she, in her father's home, is supposed to be unnoticed, so much are they all taken up with the rejoicings over the double wedding. It is very probable that when Goldsmith began the story he had no very definite plot concocted, and that it was only when the much-persecuted Vicar had to be restored to happiness that he found the entanglements surrounding him, and had to make frantic efforts to break through them. But, be this as it may, it is not for the plot that people now read "The Vicar of Wakefield"; it is not the intricacies of the story that have made it the delight of the world. Surely human nature must be very much the same, when this simple description of a quiet English home went straight to the heart of nations in both hemispheres.<sup>1</sup>

The series of great eighteenth-century novels ends with 'Humphry Clinker,' and the minor works of Novels and fiction of which the first plentiful crop appears Novelists during the last half of the eighteenth century need not detain us long. Sarah Fielding, the sister of the great novelist, published the 'Adventures of David Simple' in 1744. 'The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins' is a tale of the adventures of a shipwrecked man, published in 1751, which owes something to Swift and a good deal more to Defoe: its authorship is put down to one Robert Paltock. 'Rasselas' (1759) is Johnson's one romance: we speak of it with the rest of his prose (p. 615). Charles Johnstone's 'Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea' (1760) 'Chrysal.' is a satirical account of the motives and actions of the different people through whose hands the coin passes.<sup>2</sup> Horace Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto' (1764) professed to be a translation of a mediæval Italian romance. Horace Walpole. When Walpole wrote it, his head was, he says, 'filled with Gothic story,' and he imagines he is giving

<sup>1</sup> Among the vast quantity of Goldsmith's other writings—mostly compilations—may be mentioned his 'History of Animated Nature,' and Histories of England, Greece, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Scott has pointed out that the title and plan of the book may have been taken from Dr. Bathurst's 'Adventures of a Halfpenny,' published in *The Adventurer*, 1753.

us a genuine picture of the 'dark ages' by his delineation of the dreadful castle, with the enormous magic helmet, its spectre marching 'sedately but dejected,' and so forth. Walpole's book is more interesting from being one of the earliest of 'historical' novels, and from the fact that it indicates the spreading taste for the 'romantic' of which evidence is given us in the same year by the publication of 'Percy's Reliques' (see p. 550), than from its literary merits.<sup>1</sup> It is curious to notice that Walpole, Chatterton, and Macpherson each tried to pass off as genuine relics of antiquity the works which make them of interest in the history of the revived taste for the romantic. Henry Brooke's 'Fool of Quality' (1766) is a

'Fool of poor mixture of tedious narrative and pompous Quality.' sentiment, which has, however, been highly praised in our time for the piety of its teaching; its most interesting feature is that the work was bowdlerised by John Wesley, as the 'History of Harry, Earl of Moreland.'

Henry Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling' (1771) was written at a time when Sterne's 'Tristram Shandy,' and still

<sup>Henry Mackenzie: 1745-1831.</sup> more his 'Sentimental Journey,' were the objects of almost universal admiration.

To a large section of the public the rich mine of tenderness and sentiment that Sterne had worked may have seemed full of gold, which needed but freeing from earthy refuse to purify it. Such a one is Mackenzie, 'whose timid, delicate hero weeps,' as Taine says, 'five or six times a day; who grows consumptive through sensibility, dares not broach his love till the point of death, and dies in broaching it.' Mackenzie, however, has none of Sterne's impurity; and, in spite of tearfulness and super-sensibility, the 'Man of Feeling' is a really touching story and a very well written one.

Clara Reeve's novel 'The Old English Baron' (1777) had a sub-title on its first appearance which informed Clara Reeve: the reader that it was a 'Gothic' story. The lady 1725-1803. avows herself the imitator of Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto'; her design is, she says, 'to unite the most attrac-

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<sup>1</sup> Horace Walpole (1717-1797)—afterwards Earl of Orford—was a patron of arts and literature, a dabbler in them himself, antiquary, amateur painter, etc. His fame is mainly due to his published Correspondence, which shares with that of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu the praise of being the best in our language.

tive and interesting circumstances of *ancient romance* and modern novel': it brings us a little, a very little, nearer to the historical novels of Scott. A more famous authoress than Miss Reeve is Miss Burney, whose '*Evelina*' delighted

<sup>Frances</sup>  
<sub>Burney:</sub> the town in 1778. Macaulay, whose admiration of  
1752-1810. this book has done much to preserve its fame, gives

Miss Burney the high praise of having purified the English novel by showing 'that a tale might be written in which both the fashionable and the vulgar life of London might be exhibited with great force, and with broad comic humour, and which yet should not contain a single line inconsistent with rigid morality, or even with virgin delicacy.' This is, perhaps, a little exaggerated, but certainly among the minor novels between the death of Smollett and the opening years of the next century, Miss Burney's novel has merits of its own that claim for it the first place. '*Evelina*' is a story told in letters, which is not the only resemblance it bears to Richardson's work. It describes the adventures of a young and beautiful orphan, the child of a high-born mother who had made a *mésalliance*. Miss Burney's sense of humour is very keen, and her descriptions of society are vivid and witty; in delineating character she is scarcely so strong, having an irresistible leaning towards caricature; her manner of writing in her first novel is fresh, simple and natural. Her style, however, underwent considerable alteration as she advanced in years—owing chiefly, says Macaulay, to the influence of Johnson—and her later writings are written in cumbrous, stiff phraseology, while the matter of them is never of the excellence of her first work.

It is worth noticing in connection with our literary history that in the latter part of the eighteenth century there first appears a considerable number of women writers, among whom we have seen Sarah Fielding, Clara Reeve and Frances Burney, the last of whom is the only one of any great importance that we meet with till we reach Maria Edgeworth, whose first story appears in 1800, and Jane Austen, who had written '*Sense and Sensibility*' and '*Pride and Prejudice*' before the century closed, though they did not appear till a dozen years later.

Among less remarkable female writers who produced

works of fiction during the latter part of the century we may just mention Anne Radcliffe (1764-1823), Eliza Inchbald (1753-1821), Anna Barbauld (1743-1825), and Charlotte Smith (1749-1806). Of these the first is the most noteworthy; her most famous works, ‘The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne’ (1789), ‘The Romance of the Forest’ (1791), ‘The Mysteries of Udolpho’ (1794), being sensational stories of gloomy and mysterious deeds, in which the supernatural plays a considerable part.

Two other works of fiction remain to be noticed. One of these is ‘The History of the Caliph Vathek,’ by ‘Vathek.’ William Beckford (1760-1844); it is an extravagant ‘Arabian Nights’ story, which shows its author to have been a man of considerable humour as well as exuberant fancy. Beckford is said to have written it in French in three days: it first appeared in an English ‘unauthorised’ garb in 1784. A novel quite unlike any of the foregoing, and (according to Hazlitt) ‘utterly unlike anything else that Caleb ever was written,’ is ‘Caleb Williams,’ which Williams. appeared in 1794. Its author was William Godwin (1756-1836), the philosopher. The purpose of the book is to expose the injustice of the way in which our society is constructed, and to urge the forming of it so as to give more power to the weak in their struggle against the wealthy.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### OTHER EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PROSE-WRITERS.

FEW names are less easily dissociable in English literature than those of Addison and Steele, for they were partners in the greatest work of each of them. <sup>Joseph Ad.  
dison, 1672.</sup> Cowley had brought the essay a long distance on <sup>1719.</sup> <sup>Sir Richard Steele, 1672.</sup> the way from Bacon to Addison ; Steele founded <sup>1729.</sup> the periodical essay, which has been so marked a feature of *belles lettres* ever since. Between them they advanced the development of fiction a great step in the creation of Sir Roger de Coverley, a character drawn on a scale, and with a wealth of humorous detail, that would fit him to be the hero of a novel. Steele and Addison came at the right time; much criticism of their work has lost sight of this fact. The age was favourable to the essay. Defoe wrote in his 'Review' that many 'care but for a little reading at a time, and thus we wheello them into the knowledge of the world who would be content with their ignorance.' Upon this hint, or at any rate in this spirit, Steele acted. 'I was the first to break loose from that great body of writers who employed their wit and their parts in propagating vice and irreligion.'

- While Addison was in Ireland, Steele started 'The Tatler,' April 12, 1709, as a penny paper issued <sup>'The Tatler'</sup> three times a week ; it ended January 2, 1711. and 'The Spectator.' Its significant motto was, *Quicquid agunt homines nostri est farrago libelli.* Addison recognised the paper as Steele's through No. 6, which contained a remark of his own on the appropriateness with which Virgil distributes his epithets as compared with Homer. He wrote about forty numbers and contributed to some thirty more. 'The Spectator,' for which they were jointly responsible,

ran daily from March 1, 1711, to December 6, 1712. The sale of No. 10 reached 3,000; of some numbers, it is said, 20,000 copies were sold in a day; but the sale was reduced to 1,600 by the stamp duty, which came into force in August 1712 and raised the price to twopence. Besides this, over 9,000 copies were sold of each bound volume. Addison wrote 274 'Spectators,' Steele about 240, Pope three, one of them being his 'Messiah.'

Whence came the idea? Courthope, in his 'Addison,' writes: 'Men of active and curious minds, with <sup>Their</sup> predecessors, a little leisure and a large love of discussion, . . . were anxious to have their doubts on all subjects resolved by a printed oracle. Their tastes were gratified by the ingenuity of John Dunton . . . In 1690 Dunton published his "Athenian . . . Mercury." The object of this paper was to answer questions put to the editor by the public. These were of all kinds, on religion, casuistry, love, literature, and manners, no question being too subtle or absurd to extract a reply from the conductor of the paper. The "Athenian Mercury" seems to have been read by as many distinguished men of the period as "Notes and Queries" in our own time, and there can be no doubt that the quaint humours it originated gave the first hint to the inventors of the "Tatler" and the "Spectator."

The second hint came from Defoe's 'Review,' in No. 1 of which he wrote: 'After our serious matters are over, we shall at the end of every paper present you with a little diversion, as anything occurs to make the world merry; and whether friend or foe, one party or another, if anything happens so scandalous as to require an open *reproof*, the worl'd may meet with it there.' This refers to his 'Mercure Scandale, or Advice from the Scandalous Club,' a feature of the early numbers of the 'Review.'

Addison's contributions to the 'Tatler' became important only after No. 80; the effect of them <sup>'The Spectator.'</sup> was great. In the preface to the fourth volume Steele used the famous words: 'I fared like a distressed prince who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid. I was undone by my auxiliary; when I had once called him in, I could not subsist without dependence on

him.' Addison's advent did away with the last remains of the character of a newspaper; it developed the literary and humorous sides. In the '*Spectator*' there was a more elaborate and systematic application of the methods of the '*Tatler*,' but there is scarcely an idea or procedure in the '*Spectator*' that was not anticipated in the '*Tatler*.' Steele had conceived an imaginary editor and an imaginary set of contributors; in the '*Spectator*' this became the '*Club*,' consisting of the *Templar*, the *Clergyman*, *Captain Sentry*, the *soldier*, and *Sir Andrew Freeport*, the *merchant*, besides *Sir Roger de Coverley* and *Will Honeycomb*. If we consider these two periodicals as one, the three great underlying ideas were: the banishment of politics, the club, the exercise of a social censorship. They were the first to provide for the needs and interests of women. They introduced a wide range of subjects: the home, reading, writing, literature, manners, conversation.

In the '*Spectator*' Addison wrote No. 1, a portrait of the Spectator himself, in a measure a portrait of the painter. Steele wrote No. 2, the Club. But though Sir Roger is sketched by Steele here, Addison filled in the picture and made the Knight his own creation. Addison's other papers are, in the main, humorous, critical, or serious. To the humorous belong a great variety of papers touching upon the various social follies of the day, often with exquisite felicity of gentle ridicule. The best known critical papers are the eighteen essays on '*Paradise Lost*' published, for Sunday reading, on the first eighteen Saturdays in 1712. Other important critical papers, which should be read by every student, are No. 62, on *Mixed Wit* and the '*metaphysical*' absurdities of Cowley's '*Mistress*'; Nos. 70 and 74, on popular poetry and the ballad of '*Chevy Chase*', which he proceeds to investigate according to the critical rules of his time and to illustrate from Homer and Virgil; No. 85, on '*The Children in the Wood*'; and No. 253, on detraction and Pope's '*Essay on Criticism*'. The papers on ballads show genuine sensibility and call attention to a then generally despised branch of literature. Addison's best poetry is represented by some

hymns in the autumn of 1712; the best known, to be found in No. 453, still has a place in hymnologies:—

‘When all thy Mercies, O my God,  
My rising Soul surveys,  
Transported with the View, I’m lost  
In Wonder, Love, and Praise.’

Who has the lion’s share of the credit? Opinions still differ to some extent. Leigh Hunt wrote: ‘I prefer open-hearted Steele with all his faults to Addison with all his essays.’ Henry Morley took the same side: ‘Steele was its projector, founder, editor, and he was writer of that part of it which took the widest grasp upon the hearts of men.’ Steele’s genius was like his life—unequal, generous, impulsive. He did not take time to elaborate or thin out his ideas. ‘He writes, as a rule,’ says Dobson, ‘less from his head than from his heart, to the warmth of which organ his rapid pen gives eager and emphatic expression. His humour is delightfully kindly and genial, his sympathies quick-springing and compassionate, his instincts uniformly on the side of what is generous, honest, manly and of good report. “He had a love and reverence of virtue,” said Pope; and many of his lay sermons are unrivalled in their kind.’ Addison was more superficial both in choice and in treatment. His writings have a languid ease and elegance. De Quincey speaks of his gay malevolence and satirical humour; but it is not satire which hurts seriously, for it was directed against classes rather than persons, and was always on the side of virtue and religion. The chief charm lies in his simplicity; the words and the meaning flow easily together. ‘In his manner,’ wrote Landor, ‘there is the shyness of the Loves; there is the graceful shyness of a beautiful girl not quite grown up. People feel the cool current of delight and never look for its source.’ We may prefer Steele; but there can be no manner of doubt that the success of the ‘Spectator’ was in the main Addison’s.

As soon as the house was full, and the candles lighted, my old friend stood up and looked about him with that pleasure which a mind seasoned with humanity naturally feels in itself at the sight

of a multitude of people who seem pleased with one another, and partake of the same common entertainment. I could not but fancy myself, as the old man stood up in the middle of the pit, that he made a very proper centre to a tragic audience. Upon the entering of Pyrrhus, the knight told me that he did not believe the king of France himself had a better strut. I was indeed very attentive to my old friend's remarks, because I looked upon them as a piece of natural criticism, and was well pleased to hear him, at the conclusion of almost every scene, telling me that he could not imagine how the play would end. One while he appeared much concerned for Andromache, and a little while after as much for Hermione; and was extremely puzzled to think what would become of Pyrrhus.

When Sir Roger saw Andromache's obstinate refusal to her lover's importunities, he whispered me in the ear that he was sure she would never have him, to which he added, with a more than ordinary vehemence, 'You can't imagine, Sir, what it is to have to do with a widow.' Upon Pyrrhus his threatening afterwards to leave her, the knight shook his head and muttered to himself, 'Ay, do if you can.' This part dwelt so much upon my friend's imagination that at the close of the third act, as I was thinking of something else, he whispered in my ear, 'These widows, Sir, are the most perverse creatures in the world. But pray,' says he, 'you that are a critic, is this play according to your dramatic rules, as you call them? Should your people in tragedy always talk to be understood? Why, there is not a single sentence in this play that I do not know the meaning of.'

We pass from these to the brief consideration of the historians, philosophers, and 'miscellaneous' prose writers, not yet dealt with. One of the first of these, in point of time, is Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, 1678-1751. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, whose literary work began when his career as a statesman was over. Bolingbroke had ever loved the society of men of letters —as, for instance, Prior and Swift in Queen Anne's reign—and in the years from 1725 to Pope's death he was the close friend of that poet. Among the more famous of his writings are his letters on 'The Spirit of Patriotism' and 'The Idea of a Patriot King,' a work which exercised a very considerable influence on the political ideas of George III., and he was the founder and editor of the celebrated *Craftsman*. He left a considerable amount of unpublished writings, which were edited by Mallet.

A fellow-writer with Bolingbroke—united to him by Philip Stanhope (Earl of Chesterfield):  
hatred of Walpole—in the *Craftsman* was the Earl of Chesterfield. His most famous writings are the well-known ‘Letters to his Son.’ Chesterfield was by way of being a patron of learning and a critic of literature.  
1694-1772.

Chesterfield has at any rate the credit of drawing Samuel Johnson from Samuel Johnson the following indignant protest contained in the preface to the famous 1709-1784. ‘Dictionary’:

‘Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, and one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before. . . . Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached the ground encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.’

This extract has been quoted not merely as a specimen of Johnson’s style at its best—vigorous, direct, and without a trace of his worse mannerisms—and not only as referring to an interesting episode in Johnson’s career, but also to remind the young student that Johnson is looked upon as the first considerable man of letters who dispensed with a patron.

Samuel Johnson was born in 1709 at Lichfield, his father being a bookseller there. After a fair school education and two years spent at home, where he seems to have laid in a vast store of book-learning, he went to Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1728. During his stay there his father, who had long been in struggling circumstances, became bankrupt. Johnson left the University without taking a degree, his career being probably cut short by his father’s difficulties. Johnson’s life at the University seems to have been a painful one, owing alike to his extreme poverty and to the melan-

choly which beset him throughout his whole life, and which amounted in his case to a real disease. Johnson had now to earn his bread—his father died in 1731, leaving his son twenty pounds—and to do this he attempted to live as an usher. This proving unsatisfactory in the extreme, he tried to support himself by writing for a provincial paper (he settled in Birmingham for a time in 1733), by translating for a bookseller<sup>1</sup> and by similar means. In 1735 he married a widow (Mrs. Porter) twenty years older than himself. They took a house at Edial, near Lichfield, and set up a boarding-school. This turned out a failure, and in 1737 Johnson started for London to try his fortunes there. He was accompanied by one of his few pupils, David Garrick.

We have few details of Johnson's early literary career, but it is evident that he was an honest hack writer, toiling hard to keep his wife and himself in independence. He wrote for Cave, of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and among other work for him produced Parliamentary reports under the name of 'The Senate of Lilliput.' Among his companions at this time was the miserable (and worthless) Richard Savage,<sup>2</sup> whose life Johnson wrote (1744), and subsequently inserted among the 'Lives of the Poets,' where it is ludicrously out of proportion to the importance of its subject, but is a most interesting example of its author's powers. In 1738 appeared his first poem, 'London,' of which we have already spoken. It was received with a good deal of favour (from Pope among others), but did not materially benefit its author : he received ten guineas for it. He continued working for Cave and the other booksellers during the next ten years, his reputation rising, but his circumstances apparently not much the better for it. In 1747, however, he had drawn up the plan of his Dictionary, which he sent to Lord Chesterfield. The work lasted seven years (instead of the three that he had allowed for it), during which time he received for it some £1,600, out of which, however, he had to pay his helpers. In 1749 two ventures outside the mere book-making trade mark

<sup>1</sup> He made an English version from the French of Father Lobo's 'Voyage to Abyssinia.'

<sup>2</sup> Savage (1697-1743) was the author of 'The Wanderer' and other second-rate verse. He endeavoured to levy blackmail on the Countess of Macclesfield by declaring himself her illegitimate son, a story which Johnson believed.

Johnson's career. His best poem, 'The Vanity of Human Wishes,' was published, and his play of 'Irene' (written in its author's Lichfield days) was produced at Drury Lane, where Garrick was manager. The play was not a success (nor deserved to be), but it brought Johnson about twenty times as much money as the poem did. Next year Johnson started *The Rambler*, a series of essays which appeared twice a week for two years, ending in March, 1752, the month in which his wife died. The Dictionary and *The Rambler* are the literary works to which Johnson chiefly owed his great fame among his contemporaries. The grave, somewhat heavy philosophizing of the essayist seems to have established him as the great moralist of the day, while the Dictionary was looked upon as pre-eminently a work of scholarship. A short extract from a *Rambler* may give the reader some idea both of Johnson's plan in the work and of his style :

'Of the great force of preconceived opinions I had many proofs when I first entered upon this weekly labour. My readers having, from the performances of my predecessors, established an idea of unconnected essays, to which they believed all future authors under a necessity of conforming, were impatient of the least deviation from their system ; and numerous remonstrances were accordingly made by each, as he found his favourite subject omitted or delayed. Some were angry that the Rambler did not, like the Spectator, introduce himself to the acquaintance of the public by an account of his own birth and studies, an enumeration of his adventures, and a description of his physiognomy. Others soon began to remark that he was a solemn, serious, dictatorial writer, without sprightliness or gaiety, and called out with vehemence for mirth and humour. Another admonished him to have a special eye upon the various clubs of this great city, and informed him that much of the Spectator's vivacity was laid out upon such assemblies. He has been censured for not imitating the politeness of his predecessors, having hitherto neglected to take the ladies under his protection, and give them rules for the just opposition of colours, and the proper dimensions of ruffles and pinners. He has been requested by one to fix a particular censure upon those matrons who play at cards with spectacles. And another is very much offended whenever he meets with a speculation in which naked precepts are comprised without the illustration of examples and characters.'

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'I cannot but consider myself amidst this tumult of criticism as a ship in a poetical tempest, impelled at the same time by opposite winds, and dashed by the waves from every quarter, but held upright by the contrariety of the assailants, and secured, in some measure, by multi-

plicity of distress. Had the opinions of my censurers been unanimous, it might perhaps have overset my resolution ; but since I find them at variance with each other, I can, without scruple, neglect them, and endeavour to gain the favour of the public by following the direction of my own reason, and indulging the sallies of my own imagination.<sup>1</sup>

Johnson's fame was now very great, and he was coming to be looked upon as the great monarch of the world of letters. 'His name was highest at this time [i.e., 1755, the year of the publication of the Dictionary] in the ranks of pure literature,' says Mr. Stephen. 'The fame of Warburton'<sup>1</sup> possibly bulked larger for the moment . . . but Warburton had subsided into episcopal repose, and literature had been for him a stepping-stone rather than an ultimate aim. Hume had written works of far more enduring influence than Johnson's ; but they were little read, though generally abused, and scarcely belong to purely literary history. The first volume of his "History of England" had appeared (1754), but had not succeeded. The second was just coming out. Richardson was still giving laws to his little coterie of adoring women ; Fielding had died (1754), worn out by labour and dissipation ; Smollett was active in the literary trade, but not in such a way as to increase his own dignity or that of his employment ; Gray was slowly writing a few lines of exquisite verse in his retirement at Cambridge ; two young Irish adventurers, Burke and Goldsmith, were just coming to London to try their fortune ; Adam Smith made his first experiment<sup>1</sup> as an author by reviewing the Dictionary in the *Edinburgh Review* ; Robertson had not yet appeared as a historian ; Gibbon was at Lausanne, repenting of his old brief lapse into Catholicism as an act of undergraduate's folly ; and Cowper, after three years of "giggling and making giggle" with Thurlow in an attorney's office, was now entered at the Temple, and amusing himself at times with literature in company with such small men of letters as Colman, Bonnell Thornton, and Lloyd. It was a slack tide of literature ; the generation of Pope had passed away and left

<sup>1</sup> William Warburton (1698-1779) was the author of several works on theology, and his name for scholarship and learning stood very high, but his works have not been considered of much permanent value. He published a defence of Pope's 'Essay on Man' against certain accusations of Deism, which led to a personal friendship between him and the poet, who adopted him as his apologist and editor. Warburton became Bishop of Gloucester in 1759.

no successors, and no writer of the time could be put in competition with the giant now known as "Dictionary Johnson."

Johnson, however—mainly owing to his indolence and to his generosity—was far from being in easy circumstances. In 1756 we find Richardson lending him a small sum to release him from arrest for debt, and three years later we see him writing his novel '*Rasselas*'<sup>1</sup> to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral. It was soon after this that Johnson was relieved from the pressure of want by the king's awarding to him a pension of £300 (in 1762); his life from just about that time we have drawn for us as no other man's has

Boswell ever been. It is not from Johnson's written works and that we know him to be a great man; indeed, if we Johnson had only these to judge him by, we should assign him a creditable place among the essayists as a man who wrote sound common-sense in a cumbrous Latinized idiom; among the poets as a writer of dignified heroic couplets; among the story tellers as author of a not very remarkable didactic tale; among scholars as the compiler of a Dictionary which showed considerable research and diligence, but has necessarily—like all mere works of scholarship—been long superseded; and as a critic, for his '*Lives of the Poets*', which is, we take it, his best literary work. But Boswell's 'loose-flowing, careless-looking work,' as Carlyle says, 'is as a picture by one of Nature's own artists; the best possible resemblance of a Reality; like the very image thereof in a clear mirror. . . . How the babbling Bozzy, inspired only by love and the recognition and vision which love can lend, epitomizes nightly the words of Wisdom, the deeds and

<sup>1</sup> The book takes its name from its hero, Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, with whose doings, thoughts and moralizings it deals. Its success, says Macaulay, 'was great, though such ladies as Miss Lydia Langrish must have been grievously disappointed when they found that the new volume was little more than a dissertation on the author's favourite theme, the "vanity of human wishes"; that the Prince of Abyssinia was without a mistress, and the princess without a lover; and that the story set the hero and heroine down exactly where it had taken them up. The style was the subject of much eager controversy. . . . Many readers pronounced the writer a pompous pedant, who would never use a word of two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six, and who could not make a waiting woman relate her adventures without balancing every noun with another noun, and every epithet with another epithet. Another party, not less zealous, cited with delight numerous passages in which weighty meaning was expressed with accuracy and illustrated with splendour. Both the censure and the praise were merited.'

aspects of Wisdom, and so, by little and little, unconsciously works together for us a whole *Johnsoniad*.' As a specimen of Boswell's manner and of Johnson's conversation, let us take an extract from chap. xiv., where Boswell tells how he for the first time takes 'the liberty of waiting on Mr.<sup>1</sup> Johnson at his chambers' in the Temple :

' He received me very courteously ; but it must be confessed that his apartment and furniture and morning dress were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of clothes looked very rusty ; he had on a little, old, shrivelled, unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head ; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose ; his black worsted stockings ill drawn up ; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment that he began to talk. Some gentlemen, whom I do not recollect, were sitting with him, and when they went away, I also rose ; but he said to me, " Nay, don't go." " Sir," said I, " I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you." He seemed pleased with this compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, " Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me." I have preserved the following minute of what passed this day :

" Madness frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind by falling upon his knees and saying his prayers in the street, or in any other unusual place. Now, although, rationally speaking, it is greater madness not to pray at all, than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid there are so many who do not pray, that their understanding is not called in question."

' Concerning this unfortunate poet, Christopher Smart, who was confined in a mad-house, he had at another time the following conversation with Dr. Burney : *Burney*. How does poor Smart do, sir ? is he likely to recover ? *Johnson*. It seems as if his mind had ceased to struggle with the disease, for he grows fat upon it. *Burney*. Perhaps, sir, that may be from want of exercise. *Johnson*. No, sir ; he has partly as much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in the garden. Indeed, before his confinement he used for exercise to walk to his ale-house ; but he was carried back again. I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him ; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as anyone else. Another charge was, that he did not love clean linen—and I have no passion for it.'

We must leave Johnson and Boswell, and turn to two other prose-writers—Hume and Burke—whose work we will examine in some detail, passing on from them to a more

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<sup>1</sup> The degree of LL.D. was conferred on Johnson by Oxford in 1775.

rapid review of the remaining writers, to many of whom we would gladly give more space than is at our disposal.

Hume was the son of a small Scotch landed proprietor, David Hume: and was born on his father's pretty estate of Nine-wells, Berwickshire. He seems to have had little school or college education, though he studied for a short time apparently at Edinburgh University. After futile attempts at law and commercial life,

'I went,' he says, 'over to France (1736) with a view of prosecuting my studies in a country retreat; and there I laid that plan of life which I have steadily and successfully pursued. I resolved to make a very rigid frugality supply my deficiency of fortune, to maintain unimpaired my own independency, and to regard every object as contemptible except the improvement of my talents in literature.'

In France Hume wrote his first work, '*A Treatise of Human Nature*', of which Books I. and II. ('*Of the Understanding*' and '*Of the Passions*') appeared in 1739, while the third (and final) book—'*On Morals*'—followed in the next year. His '*Essays, Moral and Political*' were published in 1741 and 1742, and from them we select a short specimen of his style in his philosophical writings :

'To balance a large state or society, whether monarchical or republican, on general laws, is a work of so great difficulty that no human genius, however comprehensive, is able by the mere dint of reason and reflection to effect it. The judgments of many must unite in this work; experience must guide their labour; time must bring it to perfection; and the feeling of inconveniences must correct the mistakes which they inevitably fall into in their first trials and experiments. Hence appears the impossibility that this undertaking should be begun and carried on in any monarchy, since such a form of government, ere civilized, knows no other secret or policy than that of entrusting unlimited power to every governor or magistrate, and subdividing the people into so many classes and orders of slavery. From such a situation no improvement can ever be expected in the sciences, in the liberal arts, in laws, and scarcely in the manual arts and manufactures. The same barbarism and ignorance with which the government commences is propagated to all posterity, and can never come to a period by the efforts or ingenuity of such unhappy slaves.'

'His philosophical writings,' says Professor Minto, 'whatever may be their scientific value, have the merit of being clear and consistent. He was very painstaking with his composition. His manuscripts bear evidence of the most careful revision and fastidious choice of words and phrases. . . .

He offends chiefly by using terms peculiar to Scotch law. The great beauty of his style is its perspicuity. His choice of words is often very apt, and the combinations felicitous. The heavy character of his subjects is enlivened by a constant dry sparkle of antithesis, and occasional touches of quiet sarcasm and humour. He is highly eulogized by Dr. Nathan Drake : "The essays of Hume sometimes present the reader with the grace and sweetness of Addison, accompanied with a higher finishing and more accurate tact in the arrangement and structure of periods ; so that no language is more clear and lively, more neat and chaste, more durably and delicately pleasing to the ear, than what may be produced from the best portions of those elaborate but very sceptical disquisitions."

In 1744 Hume's friends tried unsuccessfully to procure him a professorship at Edinburgh ; next year he acted as tutor to a weak-minded young Scotch nobleman. From 1746 to 1748 he acted as secretary to General St. Clair in his expedition against L'Orient and his mission to Turin ; in the latter year was published his 'Inquiry concerning the Human Understanding,' which was followed by his 'Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals' and the 'Political Discourses' (1752). About this time he wrote his 'Dialogues on Natural Religion,' which were published posthumously.

In 1751 Hume settled at Edinburgh : his little inheritance was augmented by savings, and a small accession of income came to him from his appointment in 1752 as librarian to the Faculty of Advocates ; this post, moreover, gave him the use of a fine collection of books, and it is probably due to this that the first volume of 'The History of Great Britain' was ready for publication in 1754 ; the whole work was finished in 1762, his 'Natural History of Religion' having appeared meanwhile (1757). Hume's History is the first specimen of that kind of writing—there are not yet a very large number—worthy to hold a high place as a literary work. 'It is sometimes compared,' says Professor Minto, 'with "The History of England" by Macaulay, who began where Hume left off, and who is said to have been ambitious of proving a worthy continuator of the elder historian. The style, though more abstract and much less spirited than

Macaulay's, and though the writer aimed at being "concise after the manner of the ancients," was brilliant and sparkling as compared with the ordinary historical performances of that or of prior date. There was also in the work a great feature of novelty. Hume was the first to mix with the history of public transactions accounts of the condition of the people, and of the state of arts and sciences. Although these supplementary chapters of his are very imperfect, and though he had neither materials for the task nor a just conception of the difficulty of it, still, the little that he gave was a pleasing innovation. Like Macaulay, he is accused of partiality in his explanation of events, but in the opposite direction. The merits that have already been claimed for Hume's style are more strikingly displayed in the History, which, indeed, is probably his best work from a purely literary point of view. We quote a few lines from his description of the last days of Charles I.:

'It is confessed that the king's behaviour during this last scene of his life does honour to his memory, and that, in all appearances before his judges, he never forgot his part, either as a prince or as a man. Firm and intrepid, he maintained in each reply the utmost perspicuity and justness both of thought and expression; mild and equable, he rose into no passion at that unusual authority which was assumed over him. His soul, without effort or affectation, seemed only to remain in the situation familiar to it, and to look down with contempt on all the efforts of human malice and iniquity. The soldiers, instigated by their superiors, were brought, though with difficulty, to cry aloud for justice. "Poor souls!" said the king to one of his attendants; "for a little money they would do as much against their commanders." Some of them were permitted to go the utmost length of brutal insolence, and to spit in his face as he was conducted along the passage to the court. To excite a sentiment of piety was the only effect which this inhuman insult was able to produce upon him.'

In 1763 Hume went to France as secretary to the embassy; he received a pension for life and a large salary, and was made much of in French society. He acted for a time as Under Secretary of State in London, after which he returned to Edinburgh (1769), where he spent his closing years in prosperity and high honour. His last literary work—'My Own Life'—was written during the few months preceding his death in 1776.

Burke was the son of a Dublin solicitor; he was educated

at Trinity College, Dublin (where he may have known his contemporary Goldsmith), and destined for the Bar. He came to London in 1750 to study for that purpose, but though he kept his terms at the Temple he never became a barrister, giving up the law for literature. His devotion to the latter incensed his father, who in 1755 withdrew his allowance ; accordingly Burke had to live by writing, and probably had to encounter as great difficulties therein as most of the men of that age whose sole support was their pen. In 1756 he married, and in the same year appeared his first works : 'A Vindication of Natural Society' and 'A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful.' The latter of these was probably written several years before its publication ; it is an attempt at what we now call a 'psychological' theory of aesthetics, and as such is said not to have much value. 'But at least one signal merit remains to the "Inquiry" : it was a vigorous enlargement of the principle, which Addison had not long before timidly illustrated, that critics of art seek its principles in the wrong place, so long as they limit their search to poems, pictures, engravings, statues and buildings, instead of first arranging the sentiments and faculties in man, to which art makes its appeal.'<sup>2</sup> The 'Vindication'<sup>3</sup> was a satirical production written in Bolingbroke's manner and intended to be received as one of the works of that writer, whose literary remains had been but recently edited by Mallet (1754). Burke wished to show that the objections urged against revealed religion, which according to Bolingbroke and those who thought with him should induce men to give it up in favour of 'natural' religion, could be applied in a similar way to civilized or 'artificial' society as opposed to 'natural.' Hence Burke's ironical conclusion is that we must abandon artificial society. Many failed to see the irony, taking it seriously for Bolingbroke's work ; many others would not have thought the conclusion a *reductio ad absurdum*, Rousseau having advocated

<sup>2</sup> It is not quite certain whether Burke was born in 1728 or 1729.

<sup>3</sup> John Morley.

\* Otherwise entitled 'A View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from every Species of Civil Society, in a Letter to Lord ——, by a late Noble Writer.'

a similar theory in all good faith not long before. In 1759 Burke undertook to edit a yearly volume for a publisher, which was to be entitled 'The Annual Register,' and to give an account of the events of the past twelve months. It was about this time that Burke began to be familiar with politicians, one of whom—'Single-speech' Hamilton—took him to Ireland (1761) when he himself went there as secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant: a couple of years later Hamilton obtained for his friend a pension of £300 a year. Burke, however, quarrelled with Hamilton subsequently, and gave up his pension. He then acted as private secretary to Lord Rockingham during the latter's short ministry (1765-1766), and Burke's entry into Parliament dates from this time, a seat having been found for him at Wendover. The chief facts of his political career, as far as they bear upon his literary productions, must be briefly touched on. In 1769 Burke wrote his 'Observations on the Present State of the Nation' in answer to Grenville's attack on the Chatham ministry then in office; in this year, too, he purchased an estate at Beaconsfield (Buckinghamshire), the source of his wealth being never clearly ascertained. In 1770 appeared his pamphlet on 'The Cause of the Present Discontents.'

In 1771 Burke was made agent for New York, receiving £500 a year for his services; three years later he sat in Parliament for Bristol, the most important centre of the English trade with the American colonies. A little later he warmly opposed the harsh measures which were driving the colonies to revolt in his speeches on American taxation (1774), and on conciliation with America (1775), and in the letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol (1777).<sup>1</sup> In 1782 came the fall of North, and the brief ministry of Rockingham—in which his powerful supporter Burke had no cabinet office—which was terminated by its nominal chief's death three months after. The Whigs at once split into two sections, Shelburne, who headed one, coming into power, being before long displaced by the coalition of Fox and Burke and their section with Lord North. The coalition came to grief over the India Bill, which Burke eloquently

<sup>1</sup> 'Of all Burke's writings none are so fit to secure unqualified admiration as these three pieces.'—John Morley.

supported, and gave way to Pitt (1783). Connected with India is the next important event in Burke's life; on the return of Warren Hastings (1785), Burke immediately set to work to bring about his prosecution, caused him to be impeached, and took a leading part in the proceedings against him. The trial dragged on from 1788 to 1795, resulting in Hastings' acquittal. Before its termination public curiosity had long been exhausted, and public interest turned to affairs much closer to it than those of India, for France was illuminated or ablaze with the lights of the Revolution.

Cowper had rightly expressed the feelings of many of his countrymen when, in apostrophizing the Bastille, that 'house of bondage,' he had declared,

‘There's not an English heart that would not leap  
To hear that ye were fallen at last,’

and Wordsworth, travelling to the Alps, on leaving Cambridge in 1790, declares that

‘Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,  
France standing on the top of golden hours,  
And human nature seeming born again.’

So it seemed to some Englishmen, among whom were ‘two clubs of gentlemen in London, called the Constitutional Society, and the Revolution Society,’ who congratulated the French National Assembly on its actions. So it by no means seemed to Burke, who looked on the whole movement from the first with distrust and abhorrence, seeing in it only the outcome of the work of rationalistic writers and academic politicians whose issue was bound to be confusion and horror. ‘I flatter myself,’ he says in his ‘Reflections on the Revolution in France’—

‘I flatter myself that I love a manly, moral, regulated liberty as well as any gentleman of that [i.e., the Revolution] Society, be he who he will; and perhaps I have given as good proofs of my attachment to that cause in the whole course of my public conduct. I think I envy liberty as little as they do to any other nation; but I cannot stand forward and give praise or blame to anything which relates to human actions, and human concerns, on a simple view of the object as it stands, stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction. Circumstances (which with some gentlemen pass for nothing) give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind. Abstractedly speaking, government, as well as liberty, is good; yet

could I, in common-sense, ten years ago have felicitated France on her enjoyment of a government (for she then had a government) without inquiry what the nature of that government was or how it was administered? Can I now congratulate that same nation upon its freedom? Is it because liberty in the abstract may be classed amongst the blessings of mankind that I am seriously to felicitate a madman, who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am I to congratulate a highwayman and murderer who has broke prison upon the recovery of his natural rights? This would be to act over again the scene of the criminals condemned to the galleys, and their heroic deliverer, the metaphysic Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance.'

The 'Reflections' were published in 1790; they were read with avidity, and raised Burke to the height of popularity again. He followed them with a virulent 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly,' and 'An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.' He urged the Government to make war with France, and he strenuously opposed any settlement in his 'Letters on a Regicide Peace.' In 1794 Burke retired from Parliament; a peerage would have been conferred on him, but with the death of his beloved son that year the matter dropped; he received very justly a large pension, however, and this was the cause of one of his last writings, viz., 'A Letter to a Noble Lord,' a fierce rejoinder to the Duke of Bedford, who had declaimed against Burke's pension.

We must now be much more brief in our survey of the remaining prose writers, many of whom, however, <sup>Other</sup> are of considerable importance. We turn back <sup>prose</sup> writers. from Burke to glance at the chief historians; then at the philosophers, theologians and anti-theologians; and, finally, certain miscellaneous prose writers whom we have not yet studied.

Besides Hume's history, we have two or three remarkable works on the same subject (to say nothing of innumerable compilations) belonging to the latter half of the century.

Hume's countryman, Robertson, finished his 'History of Scotland' in 1759; ten years later he published his chief work, the 'History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V.' Robertson also wrote a 'History of America' (1777). He was a learned man, and wrote clearly

and carefully, though with considerable stiffness, using ‘too long words and too many of them.’ The historical masterpiece of the century is Gibbon’s great work, ‘The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’: of this, the first volume appeared in 1776, the last being published twelve years later. Gibbon, after a little more than a year spent at Oxford in his youth, had become a convert to Roman Catholicism; he was, in consequence, removed from the University and sent to live with a Protestant clergyman at Lausanne, where he became re-converted: that he had in after life no great love for any form of Christianity he makes evident in his writings. After some years spent abroad he returned home, and, having no profession, devoted himself to assiduous study. He determined to execute a work on some great historical subject, and finally settled on the decline of the Roman power. To the carrying out of his task he brought immense knowledge and unflagging energy, a cultivated imagination, and great intellectual ability. His style is glowing, his vocabulary very rich, for he formed a majestic manner of writing to suit the dignity of his matter; yet the charges brought against it of tawdriness and apparent artificiality are not without foundation. We quote but a few lines to give the student some idea of a manner of writing which before Gibbon was unknown in England:

‘At the head of these veterans his son Noureddin gradually united the Mahometan powers, added the kingdom of Damascus to that of Aleppo, and waged a long and successful war against the Christians of Syria. He spread his ample reign from the Tigris to the Nile, and the Abassides rewarded their faithful servant with all the titles and prerogatives of royalty. The Latins themselves were compelled to own the wisdom and courage, and even the justice and piety, of this implacable adversary. In his life and government the holy warrior revived the zeal and simplicity of the first caliphs. Gold and silk were banished from his palace, the use of wine from his dominions, the public revenue was scrupulously applied to the public service, and the frugal household of Noureddin was maintained from his legitimate share of the spoil, which he vested in the purchase of a private estate. His favourite Sultana sighed for some female object of expense. “Alas!” replied the King, “I fear God, and am no more than the treasurer of the Moslems. Their property I cannot alienate; but I still possess three shops in the city of Hems: these you may take, and these alone can I bestow.” His chamber of justice was the terror of the great and the refuge of the poor. Some years after the Sultan’s

death an oppressed subject called aloud in the streets of Damascus, "O Noureddin, Noureddin! where art thou now? Arise, arise, to pity and protect us!" A tumult was apprehended, and a living tyrant blushed or trembled at the name of a departed monarch.'

The knot of 'deistical,' or quasi-deistical, writers who begin to appear in Anne's reign—Tindal, Toland, Collins, etc.—and their opponents need not detain us. Nor must we linger over Berkeley, whose chief work—'The Principles of Human Knowledge'—was done before the accession of George I., though he died late in George II.'s reign.<sup>1</sup> Butler's famous Bishop of Cloyne: 'Analogy'—its full title is 'The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature'—which was published in 1736, was designed to meet the arguments of the Deists, and 'Analogy' to maintain the logical basis of Christianity against them. Butler was born in 1692, and died in 1752, as Bishop of Durham; besides his 'Analogy'—which is written in an extremely involved and abstruse style<sup>2</sup>—he published some sermons.

The works of Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow, are still of importance to the student of Francis Hutcheson: ethics. The chief of them are his 'Inquiry into 1694-1747. the Ideas of Beauty and Virtue' (1725), and a posthumously published 'System of Moral Philosophy.' Dr

Richard Price, the dissenting clergyman whose sympathy 1723-1791. with the French Revolutionists so provoked Burke's anger, published a 'Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals' in 1758. The previous year had

died Hartley, whose 'Observations on Man' (1749) David Hartley: is, says Professor Bain, 'the first systematic effort 1705-1757. to explain the phenomena of the mind by the law of association.' Adam Smith published in 1759 a 'Theory

of the Moral Sentiments.' A more famous work of Adam Smith: his is 'The Wealth of Nations' (1776), which is 1723-1790. looked upon as the foundation of the science of

<sup>1</sup> His death occurred in 1753. In 1732 he published 'Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher,' in which the views of the Deists are controverted; and in 1744 his 'Siris, a chain of Philosophical Reflections concerning the Virtues of Tar-water.'

<sup>2</sup> Paley, a critic, may be said to have interpreted him to the multitude. William Paley (1743-1805) published his first notable work, 'A View of the Evidences of Christianity,' in 1794.

political economy. Reid, who succeeded Adam Smith as Professor of Philosophy at Glasgow, wrote 'An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense' (1763), which was suggested by Hume's 'Treatise on Human Nature.' Among other works of his are a series of 'Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man' (1785), and 'Essays on the Active Powers of the Mind.'

A few other prose-writers, each chiefly known for one work, remain to be dealt with. One of these is Thomas Reid: <sup>1710-1796.</sup> Lyttelton, who published his 'Dialogues of the Dead' in 1760. Lyttelton was a poet in a small way, a writer of history,<sup>1</sup> and the friend and patron of many

writers. Lord Lyttelton: <sup>1709-1773.</sup> extract from one of his dialogues (Plutarch, Charon, and a Modern Bookseller) is a pleasant example of his style. Plutarch has been saying that 'it should be the first object of writers to correct the vices and follies of the age':

'Bookseller. We have had some English and French writers who aimed at what you suggest. In the supposed character of Clarissa (said a clergyman to me a few days before I left the world) one finds the dignity of heroism tempered by the meekness and humility of religion, a perfect purity of mind and sanctity of manners. In that of Sir Charles Grandison, a noble pattern of every private virtue, with sentiments so exalted as to render him equal to every public duty.'

'Plutarch. Are both these characters by the same author ?

'Bookseller. Ay, Master Plutarch ; and, what will surprise you more, this author has printed for me.'

'Plutarch. By what you say, it is a pity he should print any work but his own. Are there no other authors who write in this manner ?

'Bookseller. Yes ; we have another writer of these imaginary histories—one who has not long since descended to these regions. His name is Fielding, and his works, as I have heard the best judges say, have a true spirit of comedy and an exact representation of nature, with fine moral touches. He has not, indeed, given lessons of pure and consummate virtue, but he has exposed vice and meanness with all the powers of ridicule ; and we have some other good wits who have exerted their talents to the purposes you approve. Monsieur de Marivaux, and some other French writers, have also proceeded much upon the same plan with a spirit and elegance which give their works no mean rank

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\* 'History of Henry II.' (1767). His other work of some interest is 'Letters from a Persian in England' (1755).

among the *belles lettres*. I will own that were there wit and entertainment enough in a book to make it sell, it is not the worse for good morals.

‘Charon. I think, Plutarch, you have made this gentleman a little more humble, and now I will carry him the rest of his journey. . . .’

A writer whose identity has never been entirely settled was the author of a number of letters which began to appear in the *Public Advertiser* in 1769, with the signature of ‘Junius.’ These letters are attacks on the ministers — notably the Duke of Grafton and Lord North — written with vigorous sarcasm, as well as with a close acquaintance with secrets of State, that seemed to show that the author was intimate with those he spoke of. Burke when accused of the authorship absolutely denied it. To Pitt, Lyttelton, Chesterfield, Wilkes, and many others the letters were also assigned; Sir Philip Francis,<sup>1</sup> however, is now generally looked upon as their writer.

Three works which should be mentioned before we leave this part of our subject are the ‘Commentaries on the Laws of England’ (1765, etc.), by Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780); the ‘Natural History of Selborne’ (1789), by the Rev. Gilbert White (1720-1793); and ‘An Essay on the Principles of Population’ (1798), by T. R. Malthus. Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) occupies a niche in literature with some Academy ‘Discourses on Painting’ (1778, etc.), and other essays on art.

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\* Philip Francis (1740-1818) was the son of an Irish clergyman dwelling in London, where he was intimate with many statesmen and wrote political papers. Philip entered the Civil Service at the age of sixteen, and was a chief clerk in the War Office when the ‘Junius’ letters were published. In 1773 he became a member of the Supreme Council in India, and was distinguished for his opposition to Warren Hastings.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### SURVEY OF THE YEARS 1798—1832 A.D.

IT is as difficult as it is convenient to assign the particular year when one literary age may be said to close and another to begin, for there is always the voice of one or two forerunners crying the new age before its advent, and there are always stragglers, and sometimes great ones, who have fallen into the rear because they cannot or will not adapt themselves to altered conditions. The year 1660 by universal consent divides the Elizabethan or first ‘romantic’ period from that of the ‘classics,’ yet the best work of both Waller and Milton falls on the wrong sides of the dividing line. The ‘classical’ period may be said to have closed any time between 1780 and 1798. In the ninth decade of the eighteenth century ‘classical’ poetry may be seen, by a glance at the poetical calendar of that time, to have been slowly dying. But later than the year of the publication of the immortal ‘*Lyrical Ballads*’ (1798) of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the Magna Carta of the re-enfranchisement of English poetry, it is impossible, all will agree, to date the meeting and the severance of the two literary ages. Thus our upward limit of date is fixed. The downward limit of 1832 is arrived at by several considerations. If controversy is still raging almost furiously as to the comparative poetic estimate of the leaders of the second romantic school, it is clear that the final verdict of posterity cannot yet have been pronounced on their Victorian successors. The eighteenth century has been well called the ‘age of reason,’ the nineteenth century the ‘age of realism.’ But

sandwiched between the two centuries, if the expression may be permitted, there is an epoch or generation into which were crowded, first the excesses of the romantic reaction from classical excesses, and then that return to moderation and good sense which made possible a blending of classic and romantic characteristics in Victorian poetry. The year 1832, it is maintained, closes this epoch better than any other year. Scott, Crabbe and Bentham died in that year. Wordsworth had still eighteen years to live, Coleridge and Lamb two years, Southey eleven, Campbell twelve, Moore twenty, De Quincey twenty-seven, and Landor thirty-two; but the best work of all these men without exception was done. Of the writers who made the next generation famous in literature, Carlyle, Macaulay, Tennyson, Hood, Bulwer Lytton and Mrs. Browning had already published their earliest works; but all their writings of greatest moment fall after 1832.

This period of little more than thirty years is dwarfed <sup>Importance of the Period.</sup> or magnified according to the point of view. In the spring of 1864 Swinburne was sitting in Landor's lodging in Florence and listening to his recollection of having, when a boy at Rugby, made an excursion with a school-fellow to see Addison's daughter. That seems to bridge the gulf between the early eighteenth and the dying nineteenth century, and make thirty-five years appear almost as one day. But set over against it this fact: in 1798 Keats, Shelley and Byron were aged from three to ten years; in 1832 they had all been dead eight years or more: that makes thirty-five years appear almost as a thousand. Indeed, no other period in English literature, not even the Elizabethan, can vie with this in combined mass and rapidity of production; in splendour of literary achievement it is surpassed by the Elizabethan age alone. The mere enumeration of the writers of the first and second class is impressive: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Scott, Landor, Campbell, Crabbe, Moore, Southey, Leigh Hunt, among the poets; Scott, Austen, Lamb, Hazlitt, Hallam, De Quincey, Cobbett, Wilson, among prose writers. Or take the productions of a single year: in 1816 Jane Austen's 'Emma,' Byron's 'Childe

Harold' (canto iii), 'The Siege of Corinth,' and 'Prisoner of Chillon,' Coleridge's 'Christabel,' Leigh Hunt's 'Story of Rimini,' Scott's 'Antiquary,' 'Black Dwarf,' and 'Old Mortality,' Shelley's 'Alastor,' and Christopher North's 'City of the Plague,' first saw the light. With such an overwhelming output of work of a quality which it would be an insult to call respectable, the literary annalist's task of selection is obviously a difficult one. The only course that seems open to him through such a mass and such a maze is to follow out in this chapter the principal movements and lines of development in the literature of that day, and in the two remaining chapters to sketch the literary history of the most important poets and prosaists, rigidly excluding whatever is not of prime importance either in the historic estimate or through intrinsic excellence.

We have already had frequent occasion in the course of this history to use the terms 'romantic' and 'classic' and 'classic' with special reference to schools and periods of literature, and in the 'Introductory' chapter on the years 1660 to 1700 the different characters of the versification of the two schools were expounded, because their metrical differences belong particularly to the seventeenth century. But the contrast is equally marked in diction and in subject-matter; and whereas, in versification, it was the classical school that protested against the method of the *earlier* romantic school which they contemned; in diction and subject-matter, on the other hand, the contrast is best drawn between the classical school and the *later* romantic school, because it was the latter that made the protest against the classical school on these two heads and enforced it in their works. The classical period had gone to the same extremes as its predecessor, only in the opposite direction; moreover, its sway was so prolonged that the following reaction, which was in the nature of things inevitable, had to go the extreme lengths of Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley,<sup>1</sup> in order to make its protest sufficiently emphatic and to break, perhaps for ever, the swathing bands of convention and artificiality. Though this romantic

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<sup>1</sup> "L'excès des défauts fait prévoir l'excès même de la réforme."—*Leogria.*

reaction also went to extremes, its supremacy was not prolonged; hence it was possible for Tennyson, even in the next generation, to blend in his poetry what was permanent and best in the two schools, the order and harmony of the one with the profusion and diversity of the other, and so to render the antagonism of classic and and romantic a thing of the past.

The history of Wordsworth and his poetry forms the best introduction to nineteenth century Romanticism; here we must forgo the advantage of Movement. That order and take Romanticism first, deferring, however, the question of 'poetic diction' which is inseparably connected with Wordsworth. We have seen throughout the century how the way was being prepared for the later romantics by Thomson, Collins, Gray, the Wartons, Percy, Chatterton, Cowper, Burns, Blake and others; yet Wordsworth was, alike by his claims and by the admission of friends and foes, the apostle of the movement. England generally was not converted until the apostles of the next age were beginning to preach or sing. Literary England, as represented by the critics and men of culture, was coming over to the new school with almost painful slowness throughout the whole of this period. But that is saying no more than that the apostles of the romantic movement shared the fate of all other apostles and real leaders of men. Not that much poetry and prose that must be called romantic—and what is there still living from that time that is not romantic?—was not eagerly and at once welcomed by the reading public; but that the most characteristic writings of the new school, their manifestoes, their tenets, won their way to acceptance slowly, and in spite of the critics. *How* slowly may be judged by the controversy as to the merits of Pope as a poet,<sup>1</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> In editing a new edition of Pope in 1806, 'Bowles entirely mistook the functions of an editor, and maladroitly entangled his judgment of poetry with his estimate of the author's character. Thirteen years later, Campbell, in his "Specimens," controverted Mr. Bowles's estimate of Pope's character and position, both as man and poet. Mr. Bowles replied in a letter to Campbell on what he called "the invariable principles of poetry." This letter was in turn somewhat sharply criticised by Gilchrist in the *Quarterly Review*. Mr. Bowles made an angry and unmannerly retort, among other things charging Gilchrist with the crime of being a tradesman's son, whereupon the affair became what they call on

a controversy whose echoes have not yet died away. To us, looking back on this time, its production seems stamped from first to last with the romantic die; to the people of that time the romantic movement must have seemed, for at least two decades, like a ridiculous and hopeless rebellion against established authority, soon to be crushed out and forgotten.

‘What, then was Romanticism?’ Let Professor What is Herford, *the* authority on the subject, answer Romanticism? his own question. ‘Primarily it was an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility. At countless points the universe of sense and thought acquired a new potency of response and appeal to man, a new capacity of ministering to, and mingling with, his richest and intensest life. Glory of lake and mountain, grace of childhood, dignity of the untaught peasant, wonder of faery, mystery of the Gothic aisle, radiance of Attic marble—all these springs of the poet’s inspiration and the artist’s joy began to flow, not at once but in prolonged unordered succession; and not within a limited area, but throughout Western Europe, and pre-eminently in Germany, England, and France.

‘The word Romance, hackneyed and vulgarised as it is, expresses less inadequately than any other the kind of charm which these heterogeneous sources of poetry exercised in common. They were all, to begin with, *strange* ways of escape from the pressure of the ordinary, modes of deliverance from the dead weight of routine. But the romance of which poetry is begotten can never be merely strange. It has a subtler fascination, which rests partly upon wonder, but partly also upon recognition. For its peculiar quality lies in this, that in apparently detaching us from the real world it seems to restore us to reality at a higher point—to emancipate us from the

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the frontier a free fight, in which Gilchrist, Roscoe, the elder Disraeli, and Byron took part with equal relish, though with various fortune. The last shot, in what had grown into a thirty [twenty] years’ war, between the partisans of what was called the Old School of poetry and those of the New, was fired by Bowles in 1826. Bowles, in losing his temper, lost also what little logic he had, and though, in a vague way, aesthetically right, contrived always to be argumentatively wrong,’ (Lowell). Lowell’s account does not err on the side of favouring Bowles unduly.

"prison of the actual," by giving us spiritual rights in a universe of the mind, exempt from the limitations of matter and time and space, but appealing at countless points to the instinct for that which endures and subsists. To rekindle the soul of the past, or to reveal a soul where no eye has yet discerned it; to call up Helen or Isolde, or to invest lake and mountain with "the light that never was, on sea or land"; to make the natural appear supernatural, as Wordsworth and Coleridge put it, or the supernatural natural—were but different avenues to the world of Romance. How was this world, thus disclosed by imagination, related to the world of the senses, the world of "common-sense," in which the mass of men contentedly moved? The current philosophy of the eighteenth century made short work of such questions. It reduced reality, in the last resort, to sense-impressions, and the "ideas" which reflected them. But the Romantic spirit, ardent, full of the zest of discovery, and striving to grasp the height and the depth of the new earth and new heaven which had swim into its ken, could tolerate no such answer. In every direction current beliefs and current institutions forced the Romantics to formulate their own ideals, with results which told sometimes for revolt and sometimes for reaction, sometimes for fierce intervention in affairs, sometimes for quiescent or scornful seclusion from them, but never, even in a Scott or a Keats, permitted complete unconcern. . . .

'Like every other English version of a great European movement, English Romanticism had its peculiar originality and strength, and its peculiar limitations. Its chief glory lay, without doubt, in the extraordinarily various, intimate, and subtle interpretation of the world of "external Nature," and of that other world of wonder and romance which the familiar comradeship of Nature generates in the mind of man. Neither France nor Germany made any real advance upon Rousseau's vivid and impassioned landscape painting. But for Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge, Nature is an inexhaustible source and provocation of lovely imaginings. Wordsworth conveys the loneliness of the mountains,

Shelley the tameless energies of wind, Keats the embalmed darkness of verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways, with an intensity which makes all other Nature poetry seem pale.'<sup>1</sup>

The same sound and accomplished critic has laid down contrasted with Classicism. the non-formal differences between the classical and romantic schools in such just and brilliant fashion that there is nothing for it but to quote him again. ‘Classicism opposes to the arbitrariness of fancy a pervading rationality; to the mysterious the intelligible; to the unpruned variety of nature the limitations of an eclectic art; to passion glorified and dwelt on, passion restrained and somewhat disparaged. Romanticism, on the other hand, makes prominent the qualities conspicuous in the youth of a nation: bright aimless fancy, awe of the unknown, eager uncritical delight in the abundance of nature; impetuous joy and sorrow, breaking forth into such free and instant tears and smiles as the Argonauts uttered, or the comrades of Odysseus. In Classicism an age of understanding and refinement severely asserts its rights, and excludes whatever cannot be brought to its test: all that is obscure, redundant, or defective, too prominent or too unobtrusive for its part, or which suggests undignified or repellent associations. Unity of form is blended with eclecticism in subject; the

<sup>1</sup> Stendhal argued that all good art was romantic in its day. ‘Romanticism is the art of presenting to people the literary works which, in the actual state of their habits and beliefs, are capable of giving them the greatest possible pleasure; classicism, on the contrary, of presenting them with that which gave the greatest possible pleasure to their grandfathers.’ This is excellent—as a joke.

Before leaving the word *romantic* it is worth pointing out that the moving life-story of many of the authors of this period is ‘romantic’ in the non-literary and more common-place sense of the word. It has been claimed indeed that the story of our great writers is more romantic in this sense than that of any other nation. Certainly there is abundance of romance—and tragedy—in the lives of the foremost writers of 1798–1832. Did not one of them say:

‘Most wretched men  
Are cradled into poetry by wrong,  
They learn in suffering what they teach in song’?

Who does not know the life and death romance of Keats and Shelley and Byron? ‘Think too of the romance of the Great Romancer, a true Nemesis-drama in which the hero bears himself to the end with more than antique fortitude. Again, what character in all literature touches such an intimate chord of sympathy as Charles Lamb?’

taste of an exclusive age is seen in the choice of the latter, that of an intellectual age in the treatment of the former. Of these two elements the exclusiveness tends with the growth of a more catholic culture to diminish, while an enlarged understanding becomes capable of imposing a unity not less complete but only more complex upon more diverse matter. And thus the antagonism of the two movements tends to dissolve, the more permanent elements of each persisting, while the more transitory drop out. The wide outlook of Romanticism is accepted by a new generation which at the same time rejects its wilful eccentricities.'

The most widely recognised feature of the English *Romanticism* romantic movement is that often spoken of as *and Politics*. the 'Return to Nature,' which will be examined in connection with Wordsworth. Side by side with the return to Nature (with a capital N) in poetry, there was a movement initiated by Rousseau for a return to nature in social life, a movement of which the French Revolution was, in some degree at least, the outcome. It is curious to note that the poets of the early nineteenth century were drawn without exception into the romantic vortex, in some cases doubtless in spite of themselves, and to observe how they were severally affected by the political movement. In politics, Scott remained on the Conservative side throughout, Shelley and Byron (the latter with reservations) on the revolutionary side, while Keats was neutral; Wordsworth (Browning's 'Lost Leader'), Coleridge, and Southey passed over more or less from the revolutionary to the conservative side, Victor Hugo did exactly the opposite. How can the participation of all these men in the revolutionary movement in poetry be explained? Possibly because they all sought in the past relief from what they found intolerable in the present: in poetry, the revolutionaries sought relief from the no longer tolerable domination of Pope in the freedom of earlier and healthier models, a relief which the conservatives shared, if they did not seek it; in politics, the conservatives looked upon earlier ages as the golden days of monarchy and religion, while the revolutionaries may have believed

that they found their ideal of liberty, fraternity and equality in more primitive states of society.

The points of similarity between the age of Spenser and Shakespeare and that of Wordsworth are sufficiently numerous and important, especially when contrasted with the intervening classical period, to justify the application to them of the common epithet 'romantic.' This term was first applied to what has often since been called the *Second Romantic Movement*. But this was soon to be, both in its intentions and in its results, very largely in the nature of a *return* to the earlier paths of English poetry, so that the term was extended to the somewhat similar earlier movement in Elizabethan times. The degree of similarity to be found between the two ages will greatly depend, as has just been implied, on whether we contrast them jointly with the age that divided them, or compare them with each other. In the latter case we shall find in them features markedly dissimilar. This dissimilarity is partly represented by the contrast between the drama and the novel: that was the age of the drama, this is the age of the novel; that was the age of action, this is the age of introspection. True, the poetry of the age of Wordsworth is more noteworthy and characteristic than its fiction, but that detracts little if anything from the force of the illustration. For the salient fact is this: the Elizabethans came into a rich heritage of *life*, which they had to investigate and explore and make their own; their world was a world of action, and therefore their literature is before all things a literature of action; they did not often pause to reflect or analyse or balance pros and cons, they acted by impulse or by intuition. On the other hand, their descendants of the early nineteenth century were necessarily much more self-conscious, critical, introspective; they were keenly alive to the literary history of the intervening centuries, which they regarded with sympathy, or aversion, or an alternation of the two; the problems of life lay heavy upon some or all of them, not least probably upon those in whose works they seem to have left the fewest traces. Lastly, the age of Wordsworth regarded

(The two romantic periods.)

external Nature in a way unknown to the Elizabethans, who, apart from Shakespeare, were unable even to assign the flowers to their seasons.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a more or less disconnected survey of those features and movements in the literature of 1798—1832 A.D. which are not indissolubly associated with the name of any particular

*Ballads.* author. And first, a word is due to the place of ballads among ‘romantic’ influences. Wordsworth is hardly chargeable with exaggeration when he wrote of Percy’s ‘Reliques’ (1765) in 1815: ‘For our own country, its poetry has been absolutely redeemed by it. I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the ‘Reliques’; I know that it is so with my friends; and, for myself, I am happy in this occasion to make a public avowal of my own.’ Of the same work Scott wrote: ‘nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently or with half the enthusiasm.’ In spite of the ridicule of Johnson and Goldsmith, in spite of the greater though more ephemeral success of Macpherson’s ‘Ossian,’ the genuineness of which is still under discussion, Percy’s work, and ballad literature generally, came gradually but surely into wider and wider recognition, as the bibliography in Prof. Child’s ‘Ballads’ amply testifies. Before Percy only one important collection of ballads had appeared; now their position as a branch of literature is proved secure by the abiding estimation in which they are held and by the reverence with which the text is treated. The significant fact for our period is that ballads are the productions of early periods and nameless minstrels, belonging as it were to the childhood of literature, and hence they are the very antithesis of the classic eighteenth century, which in fact tried its hardest to despise and neglect them.

Here, as well as anywhere, one word must be said about ‘The Lake School.’ If any one now chooses to ‘School.’ refer to Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey as the ‘Lakists,’ it would probably be understood whom he meant. It was the fashion of the critics of the *Edinburgh*

*Review* to regard Wordsworth as the leader of what they were pleased to call the '*Lake School*,' because he, Coleridge, and Southey were supposed to have formed a 'brotherhood of poets,' who 'haunted for some years about the lakes of Cumberland.' This was good enough for contemporary satirists, one of whom suggested that

'They lived in the Lakes—an appropriate quarter  
For poems diluted with plenty of water.'

But criticism no longer needs Coleridge's distinct denial that any such 'school' existed; the three men were friends—Coleridge and Southey married sisters—and influenced each other; but it may well be doubted if there are greater resemblances between them than between any other three romantics.

With the name of Coleridge we first associate the growing influence of Germany upon English thought and literature, which was, however, slow in making itself felt. Scott had published translations from Bürger (Percy's influence working *via* Germany) and Goethe before the close of the eighteenth century. Coleridge made a powerful version of Schiller's '*Wallenstein*,' and came under the spell of Kant's transcendental philosophy. Carlyle—probably of all English writers the most in sympathy with the German mind—translated Goethe's '*Wilhelm Meister*' in 1824, published a '*Life of Schiller*' in 1825, and a volume of specimens of German Romances in 1827. The writers in '*Maga*' (*Blackwood's Magazine*, started in 1817), to which De Quincey contributed German Prose Classics in 1826-7, carried on the work thus begun. It was not until the third decade of the nineteenth century that the interest in German literature rapidly quickened and we became more familiar with the thinkers of Germany than with those of France. Outside of criticism, in which Coleridge first taught us to understand German methods, and apart from a brief 'rage' for Kotzebue in drama, it is chiefly in philosophy, theology and philology that the speculation and teaching of Germany have been very conspicuous, and these very departments were among the last to feel the general intellectual revival.

**Criticism.** Early nineteenth century prose is especially noteworthy in the realms of criticism and fiction. Its criticism was of course not all in prose. Byron's 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' says some very trenchant things about several of his contemporaries; Keats in his 'Sleep and Poetry' accuses his poetical predecessors of having

‘sway'd about upon a rocking-horse,  
And thought it Pegasus,

thus expressing the romantic poet's uncompromising opinion of the classical school. The *Anti-Jacobin*, started in 1797, and the 'Rejected Addresses' (1812) of James and Horace Smith, contained the criticism of parody and burlesque on the poetry of the day, especially that of the new school. Worthy of particular mention in the former are the contributions of Canning; among them, the 'Rovers,' a burlesque of Schiller's 'Räuber,' in which he was assisted by Hookham, Frere, and Ellis, and 'The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-Grinder.'

More important in the history of literature was the starting of the great reviews, which formulated critical opinion along particular lines, in one case more, in another less, conservative, which played a prominent part throughout the century, and have only fallen into comparative neglect in an age which demands everything in small gobbets. In 1802 the *Edinburgh Review* was founded by Jeffrey, Brougham, and Sydney Smith; after the first few numbers Jeffrey became editor in chief and held that position until 1829. Brougham wrote the notice of Byron's 'Hours of Idleness,' which resulted in the latter's 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers'; Jeffrey's review of Moore led to a duel between the poet and the critic; and it was the editor's critique of Wordsworth's 'Excursion' (1814) that opened with the famous 'This will never do.' But Jeffrey lived to apologise for his treatment of Wordsworth. The discontent of Scott and others with the tone of the *Edinburgh* led to the establishment of the *Quarterly Review* in 1809, of which William Gifford was editor until 1824, when he was

succeeded by Scott's son-in-law and biographer, John Gibson Lockhart. *Maga* followed in 1817.

Most important of all in this department was the rise of <sup>The</sup> the 'great school' of Shakesperian critics in 'great school' Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt. They may have <sup>of critics.</sup> owed something to Germany; but there was in their work an insight, a brilliance, an eclecticism, an unerring justness of appreciation, that we too seldom have cause to associate with German industry and thoroughness. The eighteenth century can show plenty of Shakesperian editors and emendators; it has not a single critic of the calibre of these three men, who alone would suffice to make the prose of any period famous. Hazlitt was probably 'the greatest of English critics of literature,' and his position seems all the more exalted when his work is contrasted, in style and acumen, with much of what passes for criticism now-a-days. Coleridge is not a great prose stylist, but he is still our finest Shakesperian critic; if we had to recommend one book as the *vade-mecum* of the student of the plays of Shakespeare, we should unhesitatingly select his 'Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare.' To the prose of Lamb we intend to return.

Even more momentous were the startling developments in fiction in these years. The first great period of English fiction opened with Richardson's 'Pamela' in 1740, and closed with Smollett's 'Humphrey Clinker' in 1771. Horace Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto,' the unwitting parent of the 'novel of terror,' had appeared in 1764, Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield' in 1766, Sterne's 'Sentimental Journey' in 1768, and Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling' in 1771. The second great period opened with Scott's 'Waverley' in 1814 and closed with his death in 1832. Between the two periods lies an expanse of some forty-three years, varied only by an occasional comet such as Miss Burney's 'Evelina' (1778) or Beckford's 'Vathek' (1784). In the last decade of the eighteenth century came the 'reign of terror' in fiction as in France; it may be represented here by Mrs. Radcliffe's 'Mysteries of Udolpho' (1794) and Lewis's 'Monk' (1795), and, with the substitution of natural for supernatural terror, by Godwin's masterpiece,

'Caleb Williams' (1794).<sup>1</sup> Scott says with reference to his immediate predecessors in fiction: 'The imitators of

Before Mrs. Radcliffe and Mr. Lewis were before us;

1814.

personages whc, to all the faults and extravagances of their originals, added that of dulness, with which they can seldom be charged. We strolled through a variety of castles, each of which was regularly called Il Castello; met with as many captains of condottieri; heard various ejaculations of S. Maria and Diabolo; read by a decaying lamp and in a tapestried chamber dozens of legends as stupid as the main history; examined such suites of deserted apartments as might fit up a reasonable barrack; and saw as many glimmering lights as would make a respectable illumination.' But, beside these mediocrities and nonentities, there were two ladies in the early years of the century who pointed out to Scott, if they did nothing more, the two main lines on which his fiction was to be drawn, those of history and Scottish character. Miss Edgeworth's first published novel, 'Castle Rackrent,' appeared in 1800, and Scott himself acknowledges amply his indebtedness to her in the way of the suggestion to do for Scotland what she had done for Ireland. Miss Jane Porter was the daughter of the surgeon to the Enniskillen Dragoons, and seems to have inherited a passion for the romance of war. Her 'Thaddeus of Warsaw' (1803) and 'Scottish Chiefs' (1810) united for the first time all the essential elements of the modern historical novel, without containing one of the higher qualities of local or temporal colour, a correct picture of national manners or representation of the condition of the times, heroes drawn from real life, variety in character, or tolerable dialogue. Yet that she pointed out the road which the historical novel was to follow and led the way herself, cannot for one moment be doubted. It is stated as a known fact that Sir Walter Scott admitted to George IV. one day in the library at Carlton Palace, that the 'Scottish Chiefs' was the parent in his mind of the Waverley novels.<sup>2</sup> Such a

<sup>1</sup> Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' (1817) is a powerful, if belated, example of the same school.

<sup>2</sup> See *Annual Register*, 1850.

generous acknowledgment as this makes it the more necessary to add that, from our standpoint, such works as Sophia Lee's 'Recess' (1785) and Jane Porter's novels are historical only in name. It is obvious that what is called 'historical fiction' may range from the purely fanciful treatment of historical *names* to historical truth in incident, character, and colouring. The most superficial comparison of Scott with his predecessors will show that through his treatment of historical characters and movements he created an entirely new species of fiction. With Scott, thus shown to be the creator of the historical novel, and Jane Austen, the creator of the domestic novel of character, we deal more fully in the chapter on 'Prose.'

It is marvellous testimony to the greatness of Scott and <sup>After</sup> Miss Austen, that though they were pioneers in the <sup>1814.</sup> historical and the domestic novel respectively, they both reached almost the highest degree of success in their respective spheres. Men of great talent could hardly be content to follow an already well-beaten track: accordingly, Lockhart struck out a line for himself in his classical novel 'Valerius' (1821), Thomas Hope did the same in his picaresque novel of Eastern travel, 'Anastasius' (1819), James Morier achieved a greater and lasting success in his novel of Persian life, 'Hajji Baba' (1824), while Thomas Love Peacock wrote some novels of the 'fantastic-satirical order'—'Crotchet Castle' (1831) is as good an example as any—that are unique in English fiction. The imitators and followers of Scott and Miss Austen were more numerous and necessarily less important. Galt and Wilson ('Christopher North') are the most distinguished followers of Scott in the novel of Scottish life and character, Miss Ferrier and Miss Mitford of Miss Austen in the domestic, family, or social novel. Scott's followers usually went too far and exaggerated his faults, especially in the imitation of *obbligato* characters, such as dwarfs, jesters, gipsies, which they carried to the point of caricature, just as they also overloaded their tales with minute descriptions of costume and scenery, which are at times somewhat wearisome even in the master.

The drama of this period can find no place in these

chapters beyond this paragraph because of its comparative insignificance. The 'academic' drama of this time is far greater than the acting drama, for it includes such masterpieces as Shelley's 'Cenci,' 'Prometheus Unbound,' and 'Hellas' (the last two belonging to the small class of English 'Greek' plays); while on a lower level are his satiric 'Oedipus Tyrannus, or Swell-foot the Tyrant,' Landor's 'Count Julian' (1812), and Byron's 'Manfred,' a dramatic poem, 'Sardanapalus,' 'Marino Faliero,' 'Werner,' 'The Deformed Transformed,' and the mysteries, 'Cain' and 'Heaven and Earth.' All these belong to poetry rather than to the drama. Of Joanna Baillie's 'Plays on the Passions' (1798—1836), only one was ever produced on the stage. On the contrary, among the plays of Sheridan Knowles, the first and almost only literary 'dramatist' of the period, 'Virginius' (1820), 'The Hunchback' (1832), and 'The Wife' (1833) still hold the boards.

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<sup>1</sup> Under this term we include those plays which, whether written with a view to being acted or not, are for one reason or another hardly ever acted, and belong more strictly to the purely poetical, rather than to the dramatic, division of literature.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

POETRY 1798—1832 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

To represent adequately the various influences and interests, movements and controversies, for which Wordsworth stands in English literature, is impossible within the scope of a few pages. The present writer has the more modest aim of stimulating interest and further study by a correct presentation of one or two sides of a great poet's personality and work.

William Wordsworth, the son of Lord Lonsdale's agent, was born at Cockermouth. <sup>His Life</sup> He was educated at Hawkshead Grammar School, where he showed keen zest for manly sports and that ardent love of Nature which was to distinguish the future nature-poet. At St. John's College, Cambridge, he read much and studied little. After taking his degree he travelled with a friend on the Continent, and felt and showed a passionate interest in the French Revolution which at a later time became a dispassionate distaste. In 1795 his friend, Raisley Calvert, died, and left him £900, mainly on the interest of which sum his sister Dorothy and he lived for nearly eight years. In 1797 the intimacy with Coleridge ripened into a friendship of immense consequence to both poets, one of its fruits being the 'Lyrical Ballads' of 1798. In 1799 Wordsworth and Dorothy settled at Grasmere, whence he removed in 1813 to Rydal Mount, his residence until his death in 1850. In 1802 he married Mary Hutchinson, his 'Phantom of Delight'; in the same year Lord Lonsdale died, and his successor, not content with

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of some poets whose prose is of secondary importance (e.g., Wordsworth) all that is said of them will be found in this chapter.

settling the delayed claims which had kept the Wordsworth family in difficulties for twenty years, procured for the poet the sinecure office of Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland, which placed him in easy circumstances for the rest of his life. In 1843, on the death of Southey, he became Poet Laureate, and finally in 1850 Tennyson received

‘This laurel greener from the brows  
Of him that utter’d nothing base.’

Such is the bare chronicle of his life—the record of one to whom home and the affections of home were almost everything. Wordsworth’s theories and his poetry, which is infinitely greater than his theories, were during most of his life received with contempt and ridicule by the critics and the public. But none of these things—contempt, sneers, hostile criticism, parody, silence—moved him; he held on in spite of them all, and he finally brought England over to his side. He had had from the first what was ample compensation to him, the support of his sister:

‘She whispered still that brightness would return ;  
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still  
A poet, made me seek beneath that name,  
And that alone, my office upon earth.’

Gradually but surely his following increased, until at last, towards the close of his life, he became the acknowledged king of English letters, and even in danger of the reaction that inevitably follows an excess of popularity.

The question of the order in which Wordsworth’s poems are to be arranged and studied has been much debated.

<sup>His best</sup> He himself rejected the chronological arrangement in favour of what he called the psychological classification: Poems of the Affections, the Fancy, the Imagination, Sentiment and Reflection. Others have proposed classification by form and by theme. For the average student we venture to think the question of order, supremely important in the case of Shakespeare, to be in this instance subsidiary. Wordsworth is hardly a poet of ‘masterpieces.’ His best things are scattered up and down his poetry in whatever order it is arranged, and the student will not fare ill if he does not miss them. They

include the following poems: ‘Lines composed above Tintern Abbey’ (1798),<sup>1</sup> ‘The Sparrow’s Nest’ (1801), ‘My heart leaps up’ (1802), ‘Stanzas written in my Pocket-copy of Thomson’s “Castle of Indolence”’ (1802), ‘The Solitary Reaper’ (1803), ‘To the Cuckoo’ (1804), ‘I wandered lonely as a cloud’ (1804), ‘The Affliction of Margaret’ (1804), ‘Ode to Duty’ (1805), ‘Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle’ (1805), ‘Character of the Happy Warrior’ (1806), ‘Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’ (1803-6), ‘Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle’ (1807), ‘Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg’ (1835), and the pick of the

*Sonnets.* As a sonneteer, Wordsworth’s merits are simply remarkable.

The sonnet had been neglected for a century, revived by Thomas Warton, and cultivated by Bowles, who inspired Coleridge (but not to write sonnets). But that the poet of ‘The Idiot Boy’ should be the one to bring the sonnet back to its pristine perfection and to popular favour is one of those things one would never be likely to prophesy. Yet the best sonnets of Wordsworth are worthy of Shakespeare or Milton, unsurpassable, perfect, equalled only by ‘Let me not to the marriage of true minds’ and its few compeers. If ‘The world is too much with us’ is the best, ‘Westminster Bridge’ runs it very close, and is given here as being the less well known.

‘Earth has not anything to show more fair ;  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty :  
This city now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields and to the sky,  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill ;  
Ne’er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !  
The river glideth at his own sweet will :  
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still !’

There can be no doubt that Wordsworth found the

<sup>1</sup> In the case of Wordsworth only, the dates given are those of composition, not publication.

discipline of sonnet-writing helpful and beneficial; indeed he says so himself in 'Nuns fret not,' as plainly as words can say it:

‘In truth the prison, unto which we doom  
Ourselves, no prison is : and hence for me,  
In sundry moods, ’twas pastime to be bound  
Within the Sonnet’s scanty plot of ground ;  
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be),  
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,  
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.’

Of the best poems mentioned above, the ‘Lines Written above Tintern’ alone appeared in the ‘Lyrical Ballads’ (1798). The importance of this work has been already insisted on; in the Prefaces and Appendix of the later editions Wordsworth promulgated and defended the poetic theories which he had exemplified in the body of the work. The ‘Lyrical Ballads’ therefore are to modern poetry what Rossetti’s ‘Annunciation’ is to modern painting; they ‘enriched the

<sup>Wordsworth and Coleridge.</sup> world of English poetry as no one volume has since done.’ The story of the early association of the joint authors of this work is probably the most important passage in both their lives, and, often as it has been told, must be re-told here. If we go back a few years, Coleridge (1772—1834) was lying on the roof of Christ’s Hospital, dreaming away his time, while Wordsworth was up at St. John’s College, Cambridge, a youth of seventeen, in total isolation of the higher kind. Coleridge came up in his nineteenth year to Jesus College; but, though they were in Cambridge for a short time together, they seem to have heard nothing of each other. In 1789, the ‘Sonnets’ of William Lisle Bowles had been published; in 1791 a copy was placed in Coleridge’s hand, and had the effect of starting him on his poetical career. He is said to have made forty copies of the book with his own hand. What Coleridge wrote at Cambridge was worthless, without a trace of the genius of his later work. On the other hand, although only one poem of Wordsworth’s, ‘An Evening Walk,’ bears the Cambridge stamp, that one is not unworthy in some respects of the place or of the future fame of the poet. From 1789, Wordsworth was occupied for a

time with the French Revolution, which, night after night, he says, distracted him like a nightmare. In 1793, Coleridge gets a little book of Wordsworth's, 'Descriptive Sketches,' and is instantly and violently moved by it. He writes immediately, in his impulsive manner, to all his friends: 'The giant Wordsworth—God love him!' In 1795-6, when they became intimate, each felt that their friendship was by far the most important thing that had ever happened to them. In 1797, Wordsworth and his sister removed to Alfoxden, in Somersetshire, on purpose to be near Coleridge. It is not too much to say that the first personal intercourse between the two men raised Coleridge from a fourth-rate poet to one of the first order, and in fact he wrote nearly everything of his that has qualities of enduring worth within two years or so from the beginning of their friendship. Coleridge's influence on Wordsworth, though less immediately momentous, was of great value; for one thing it helped to rid him of those morbid ideas which had come from brooding over the French Revolution.

The outcome of their sojourn together on the Quantocks was the 'Lyrical Ballads,' for which the generous <sup>The</sup> Cottle of Bristol gave thirty guineas, although in <sup>Lyrical</sup> <sub>Ballads,</sub> a few years, when disposing of his business, he handed over the copyright to the purchaser as worthless. Wordsworth refers to the joint authorship in the 'Prelude':

'That summer, under whose indulgent skies  
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved  
Unchecked, or loitered mid her sylvan combs,  
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,  
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner;  
And I, associate with such labour, steeped  
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,  
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,  
After the perils of his moonlight ride,  
Near the loud waterfall.'

Coleridge has left us a more detailed account in prose:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This quotation will save the necessity of illustrating Coleridge's prose style in the next chapter.

‘During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves. In this idea originated the plan of the ‘Lyrical Ballads’; in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind’s attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us. With this view I wrote the ‘Ancient Mariner,’ and was preparing, among other poems, the ‘Dark Ladie,’ and the ‘Christabel,’ in which I should have more nearly realised my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth’s industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. In this form the ‘Lyrical Ballads’ were published. . . . To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length, in which he was

understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of style that were not included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of real life.'

The importance of the above passage left us no option as to whether to quote it or not. Whoever would understand this period should study it carefully, for it is the second romantic movement in little. In the famous Preface of

Poetic Diction. 1800 (and the Appendix of 1802) Wordsworth promulgated his peculiar theories of poetry and poetic diction; the controversy which they raised is not yet closed.<sup>1</sup> 'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science.' In this strain Wordsworth commands universal assent, and shows us what fine prose he can write. 'The first volume of these poems ['Lyrical Ballads,' 1798] was published as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted which a poet may rationally endeavour to impart. . . The reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected, as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. . There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction. . . I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject; consequently, there is, I hope, in these Poems little falsehood of description, and my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. . . This practice has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been

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<sup>1</sup> It occupies a considerable portion of the Introduction to a centenary (1898) reprint of the 'Lyrical Ballads.'

regarded as the common inheritance of Poets. . . It may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.' Here indeed Wordsworth threw down the gauntlet, which others were not slow to take up. In parts, we may admit, he misstated and overstated his own case. 'What then did he mean?' asks Coleridge. 'I apprehend,' he replies, 'that, in the clear perception, not unaccompanied with disgust or contempt, of the gaudy affectations of a style that passed current with too many for poetic diction (though, in truth, it had as little pretensions to poetry as to logic or common sense), he narrowed his view for the time; and feeling a justifiable preference for the language of nature and of good sense, even in its humblest and least ornamented forms, he suffered himself to express, in terms at once too large and too exclusive, his predilection for a style the most remote possible from the false and showy splendour which he wished to explode.'

However far Wordsworth was right or wrong on par-

<sup>Some of</sup> ticular points, several great claims made on his Wordsworth's behalf must be admitted; he 'took stock' of reforms.

the language of poetry, cleared out a lot of old rubbish which had long ceased to have any but a conventional poetic value, and made available for poetic use many words that had long been falsely regarded as unpoetic. And this is only symbolical of what he achieved in other departments; he extended likewise the domain of poetry in the realm of nature, not external nature alone, but in the lower ranks of human nature too. The eighteenth century had clung to the surface of things like a limpet, never penetrating beneath; Wordsworth habitually worked from the surface towards the centre, and to this characteristic all his reforms are traceable. As one of his disciples says, Through seeing in many things which had hitherto been deemed unfit subjects for poetry a deeper truth and beauty than in those which had been most dealt with, he did a wider service to poetry than any other poet of his time.

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\* The reader is referred to Wordsworth's Preface and Appendix, and to Coleridge's criticism of them in his 'Biographia Literaria,' Chapter xiv., sqq.

There is another debt that we owe to him. We turn to other poets for amusement, for intellectual stimulation, for cultivation of the aesthetic emotions; we turn to Wordsworth for moral and spiritual consolation. He speaks direct to the soul. Not that he is by any means a distinctly religious poet. His artistic canon is expressed in these words: 'his works, as well as those of other poets, should not be considered as developing all the influences which his own heart recognised, but rather those which he felt able as an artist to display to advantage.' And these were, above all, the influences of Nature. He is the high priest of our restored communion with Nature. To Milton, who knew nature chiefly through books, she was a glorious spectacle, to Wordsworth she was a living power. Milton's epithets are expressive 'of a real emotion in the spectator's soul, not of any quality detected by keen insight in the objects themselves.' This insight was the secret of Wordsworth's strength. 'Most eighteenth-century poets in like manner either content themselves with the mere description of single scenes in Nature, or they transfer to these scenes their own emotions. It is Wordsworth who first thinks of Nature habitually as a whole, and treats of the active influence which she may exert on the mind of man. It is not every one, however, as he says, who is capable of receiving all that nature is ready to give. It is useless to approach her except with observing eyes and an open heart. The accuracy of Wordsworth's own observation of Nature is proved to us on all hands in his poems, and his sensitiveness of feeling is well shown in the 'Lines composed above Tintern Abbey.' But to get the utmost good possible, he tells us a further process is necessary, a withdrawal into oneself and an inward contemplation of what one has seen and felt. It is the picture left on the mind after this process which is the last lesson Nature can give us, and which is the fit subject of poetry. Often the emotion originally excited will be completely transmuted in this process of inward reflection: sadness may be made the substance of a higher joy.' Thus we see that Nature in Wordsworth's poetry is not regarded as a mere background

for his pictures of man, nor as a mirror reflecting the feelings of man, but rather as a wonderful power around us calming and influencing our souls.

Exaggerated claims have been put forward on behalf of Wordsworth's influence on English poetry, and on the other hand these claims have been wholly denied. His best work was written between the years 1797 and 1808, and the best of his best is supreme in its kind. It is intermingled with a good deal that, whether or not as a consequence of his theories, is comparatively of very poor quality. Sometimes the two qualities are most strangely blended in the same poem, as in 'The Sailor's Mother.' Coleridge (in the work to which we have already referred the reader) lays down the characteristic blemishes and defects of his friend's poetry. The blemishes he finds in it are: first, the inconstancy of the style, the sudden transitions from lines of peculiar felicity to a style not only uninpassioned but undistinguished; second, a matter-of-factness, or laborious minuteness and circumstantiality in certain poems; third, an undue predilection for the dramatic form in certain poems; fourth, occasional prolixity, repetition, and an eddying instead of progression of thought; last, thoughts and images too great for the subject. On the other hand, he enumerates the following excellences: first, a perfect appropriateness of words to meaning, and a frequent *curiosa felicitas* of diction; second, a freshness of thought and sentiment, and perfect truth to nature in his images and descriptions; third, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; the sympathy of a contemplator from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature, no injuries of wind or weather, of toil or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine; last, a pre-eminence of imaginative power.

The personality of Wordsworth has been, as it were, rehabilitated in recent years through the labours of a French scholar, M. Émile Legouis.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'The Early Life of William Wordsworth, 1770—1798. A Study of "The Prelude." (Dent, 7s. 6d. net.)

He has shown that the popular conception of the poet as a prim, staid, if not stolid, Puritan, as a self-absorbed, uninteresting recluse, as characterised by a calm, passionless aloofness from the world of human interests, is a total misconception. M. Legouis proves conclusively that up to 1798 Wordsworth was the antithesis of all this. And if he changed much in later years, he did not change to the very opposite of what he had been before. The very massiveness of his character has misled some critics. As Dowden finely says, ‘Instead of transforming his being, as did Shelley, into a single energy, all diverse energies blended in Wordsworth’s nature into a harmonious whole. The senses were informed by the soul, and became spiritual; passion was conjoined with reason and with conscience; knowledge was vivified by emotion; a calm passivity was united with a creative energy; peace and excitation were harmonised; and over all brooded the imagination. Wordsworth is never intense for the very reason that he is spiritually massive. The state which results from such consentaneous action of diverse faculties is one not of pure passion, not of pure thought; it is one of impassioned contemplation. To those who are strangers to this state of impassioned contemplation, Wordsworth’s poetry, or all that is highest in it, is as a sealed book.’

We have already sampled the ‘Sonnets.’ The best of the other poems are too long or too hackneyed to give here, and we therefore quote the latter part of the Spenserian ‘Stanzas written in Thomson’s “Castle of Indolence”’; the opening stanzas describe Wordsworth himself, these give us Coleridge.

‘With him there often walked in friendly guise,  
Or lay upon the moss by brook or tree,  
A noticeable Man with large gray eyes,  
And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly  
As if a blooming face it ought to be;  
Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear,  
Deprest by weight of musing Phantasy;  
Profound his forehead was, though not severe;  
Yet some did think that he had little business here:

‘Sweet heaven forfend ! his was a lawful right,  
Noisy he was, and gamesome as a boy;

His limbs would toss about him with delight  
 Like branches when strong winds the trees annoy.  
 Nor lacked his calmer hours device or toy  
 To banish listlessness and irksome care ;  
 He would have taught you how you might employ  
 Yourself ; and many did to him repair,—  
 And certes not in vain ; he had inventions rare.

‘ Expedients, too, of simplest sort he tried :  
 Long blades of grass, plucked round him as he lay,  
 Made, to his ear attentively applied,  
 A pipe on which the wind would deftly play ;  
 Glasses he had, that little things display,  
 The beetle panoplied in gems and gold,  
 A mailed angel on a battle-day ;  
 The mysteries that cups of flowers enfold,  
 And all the gorgeous sights which fairies do behold.

‘ He would entice that other Man to hear  
 His music, and to view his imagery :  
 And, sooth, these two were each to the other dear :  
 No livelier love in such a place could be :  
 There did they dwell—from earthly labour free,  
 As happy spirits as were ever seen ;  
 If but a bird, to keep them company,  
 Or butterfly sate down, they were, I ween,  
 As pleased as if the same had been a Maiden-queen.’

We have already seen something of Samuel Taylor Coleridge in connection with the ‘Lyrical Ballads,’ and have

Coleridge, noted that his allotted part was, in a word, to  
 1772-1834. obtain a ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ for the  
 supernatural. This aim is emblematical of the best of his  
 poetry, as will be seen. Coleridge was at Jesus College,  
 Cambridge, from 1791 to 1794, with an interval in a  
 regiment of dragoons (under the name of ‘Comberback’),  
 from which his friends bought him out. In 1795, he  
 married Miss Sarah Fricker, of Bristol, the sister of  
 Southey’s wife. Wife and family and the Wordsworths,  
 whose friendship he then made, should have made a  
 different man of him, if anything could, but nothing could.  
 He said of himself to Thelwall in 1796 : ‘The walk of the  
 whole man indicates *indolence capable of energies*. I am and  
 ever have been a great reader, and have read almost  
 everything, a library cormorant. I am *deep* in all out of  
 the way books whether of the monkish times or the

puritanical era.' ‘Indolence capable of energies’—no genius ever described himself more accurately. Lamb called him ‘an archangel a little damaged.’ There are most curious points of similarity between the careers of Coleridge and De Quincey, especially in that both were failures in the sanctuary of home, both were the slaves of opium. Yet, curiously enough, Coleridge has often been judged the more severely of the two. In 1798, the brothers Wedgwood, with singular generosity, secured him an income for life, and he went to Germany with the Wordsworths. German metaphysics fascinated him, and turned, as far as production goes, the poet into a philosopher. The gain to his poetry was certainly nil; but the combination of poetic sensibility with philosophical subtlety made him an almost perfect critic. His years of full poetic inspiration were few, two at the most (1797-8), and hence the quantity of his best work is in inverse proportion to its quality. In 1816, in the hope of conquering his habit of taking opium, he went to live with a surgeon at Highgate, and there for eighteen years his house was as a temple, and he was as an oracle, for those interested in three branches of literature—poetry, criticism, and philosophy. ‘Coleridge alone among English writers is in the front rank at once as poet, as critic, and as philosopher.’

It is not necessary to attribute the decay of Coleridge’s poetic powers, or rather the ‘stinting’ of the poetic flow, to Germany or to opium; probably this would be to confuse cause and effect. The real cause was something innate in the man, which he himself was painfully aware of. In a poem ‘To William Wordsworth’ he laments

‘Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,  
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain;  
And all which I had culled in wood-walks wild,  
And all which patient toil had reared, and all  
Commune with thee had opened out—but flowers  
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,  
In the same coffin, for the self-same grave! ’

But we at least have nothing to lament, for if Coleridge had been Wordsworth or even a ‘reformed character,’ nothing

can be more certain than that we should never have had 'The Ancient Mariner,' 'Christabel,' 'Kubla Khan,' and 'Love.' If to these be added 'Dejection' and 'France,' the rest is negligible. The four first-named may be called 'dream poems.' 'Kubla Khan' was actually a dream;<sup>1</sup> it is a fragment because he was interrupted in transcribing it by an unspeakable caller. Coleridge pointed out to Hazlitt that there is 'a class of poetry built on the foundation of dreams.' In such poetry he is *facile princeps* in universal literature. His poetry has, Saintsbury says, 'what one hears at most three or four times in English, at most ten or twelve times in all literature—the first note, with its endless echo-promise, of a new poetry.' This is the more remarkable because Coleridge had begun in the old wooden eighteenth century style. 'He has the unique distinction among the singers of his time of himself exemplifying the antagonistic styles within the compass of his own verse.'

To the development of English poetry, Christabel, though only a fragment, is Coleridge's most important contribution. 'The metre of the Christabel,' says the Preface, is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.' Coleridge was unaware that his 'new principle' is that upon which the oldest English verse is constructed. So were his brother poets, but they seized upon it with delight. While Coleridge was hoping for a return of the inspiration which would enable him to complete the poem, the MS. fragment was left to flutter about the literary circles. In 1801, Scott heard it recited by Sir John Stoddart, and 'the music in his heart he

<sup>1</sup> The writer apologises to the Psychical Research Society: he should have said it passed from sub-liminal into supra-liminal consciousness during sleep.

bore,' reproducing it as best he could in the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' (1805), whence Byron borrowed it for his 'Siege of Corinth' and 'Parisina' (1816).

That Coleridge is the supreme musician of English poetry will be seen by our first quotation—from 'Kubla Khan.'

'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
 A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
 Through caverns measureless to man  
     Down to a sunless sea.  
 So twice five miles of fertile ground  
 With walls and towers were girdled round:  
 And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
 And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
 Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.'

The second quotation is from 'France,' which Shelley declared to be the finest ode of modern times:

'Ye clouds! that far above me float and pause,  
 Whose pathless march no mortal may control!  
 Ye ocean-waves! that, wheresoe'er ye roll,  
 Yield homage only to eternal laws!  
 Ye woods! that listen to the night-birds singing,  
 Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,  
 Save when your own imperious branches swinging  
     Have made a solemn music of the wind!  
 Where, like a man beloved of God,  
 Thro' glooms, which never woodman trod,  
     How oft, pursuing fancies holy,  
 My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,  
     Inspired beyond the guess of folly,  
 By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!  
 O ye loud waves! and O ye forest high!  
 And O ye clouds that far above me soared!  
 Thou rising sun! thou blue rejoicing sky!  
     Yea, everything that is and will be free!  
 Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,  
     With what deep worship I have still adored  
         The spirit of divinest liberty.'

What little need be said about Scott's life may be said here; his prose will be treated in the next chapter. Sir Walter Scott's poetry belongs to the interval between 1771–1832 Coleridge's and Byron's. As Byron's poetry

dealt with the present and Shelley's with the future; so on the other hand, Scott's poetry dealt with the less remote, and Keats's with the more remote, past. Of the boy Scott we may get a good idea from a fragment of his 'Autobiography': 'The summer day sped onwards so fast that, notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, I forgot the hour of dinner, was sought for with anxiety, and was still found entranced in my intellectual banquet. To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my schoolfellows and all who would hearken to me with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy.' It is often supposed that Scott was a poet by birth and a novelist by accident; it would probably be much easier to show that his whole training and early life were preparing the future historical novelist, and that it was only by accident poetry diverted him for a time from his life's work. The Scottish Borders and Lowlands were the 'happy hunting-ground' of his youth and early manhood. He said he thought he should die if he could not see the heather once a year. He traced his descent from the great Border family, now represented by the Duke of Buccleuch; in 1802-3 he edited the 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,' a collection second in importance to Percy's; his first, perhaps his best, poem, the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' was on a Border subject; he aspired to be a modern representative of the great Border lairds, and built Abbotsford within sound of the ripple of the Tweed; Wordsworth in 'Yarrow Revisited' calls him the 'Border Minstrel.' His life was prosperous and happy until the downfall of the Constables and the Ballantynes, his publishers and printers, in 1826, a crash which involved him in liabilities amounting to £117,000. His attempt at the age of fifty-five to wipe off this debt is one of the most heroic stories in literary history. In five years he had repaid £63,000, but the effort killed him. When in 1831 he went for a voyage in a vessel placed at his disposal by the King, Wordsworth wrote:

‘The might  
Of the whole world’s good wishes with him goes;  
Blessings and prayers, in nobler ratine’

Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows,  
Follow this wondrous Potentate.'

He returned in time to die at Abbotsford in 1832.

Scott was, in a popular sense, at the head of living English poets until his pupil, Byron, 'bet him' in 'Childe Harold' (1812) and the Eastern Tales; from 1814 he was at the head of living prose writers. His strength as a poet lies in narrative and in exquisite little lyrics. His narrative poems are a kind of elaborated ballad, without the 'preciousness' or naïveté of the true ballad. There is nothing of the personal or autobiographical in his poetry; there is nothing of Byron's intensity of feeling or force of personality. He shows a great love of external nature; but nature is hardly sufficing in herself; she must be haunted or peopled with human beings, with wild Highlanders or a legendary 'lady.' Thus we see the force of the complaints of current criticism, that we outgrow Scott's poetry, that it ceases to satisfy our deeper thoughts and longings; to which it may be replied that it was never intended to; let it fill its niche. To another complaint, that of composition and versification of almost Byronic slovenliness, no satisfactory reply can be given. Yet, to what perfection Scott can attain in his own line of choice, the following short extracts will show.

'Proud Maisie is in the wood,  
Walking so early;  
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,  
Singing so rarely.'

"Tell me, thou bonny bird,  
When shall I marry me?"—  
"When six braw gentlemen  
Kirkward shall carry ye."

"Who makes the bridal bed,  
Birdie, say truly?"—  
"The gray-headed sexton  
That delves the grave duly."

"The glow-worm o'er grave and stone  
Shall light thee steady.  
The owl from the steeple sing,  
'Welcome, proud lady.'"

'The bride kiss'd the goblet : the knight took it up,  
 He quaff'd off the wine, and he threw down the cup.  
 She look'd down to blush, and she look'd up to sigh,  
 With a smile on her lips, and a tear in her eye.  
 He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,—  
 "Now tread we a measure!" said young Lochinvar.

'So stately his form, and so lovely her face,  
 That never a hall such a galliard did grace;  
 While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,  
 And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;  
 And the bride-maidens whisper'd, " 'Twere better by far,  
 To have match'd our fair cousin with young Lochinvar."

'One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,  
 When they reach'd the hall-door, and the chaiger stood near ;  
 So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,  
 So light to the saddle before her he sprung !  
 "She is won ! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur ;  
 They'll have fleet steeds that follow," quoth young Lochinvar.'

Byron, Shelley, Keats ! What a trio ! What inexhaustible romantic interest, what marvellous and fascinating life-stories, crowded into the space of thirty-six, thirty, twenty-six years, respectively ! But our business is history and criticism. If the judgment of foreign nations were that Lord Byron, of a contemporary posterity, <sup>1788-1824.</sup> Byron might be the greatest of English poets, for he had an enormous reputation abroad. 'In Byron's hands English poetry became for the first time European poetry.' In 1820, the French poet Lamartine addressed to him his poem 'L'Homme,' which is at once flattering and outspoken, as the following lines will show :

‘Et toi, qui dans tes mains . . .  
 Tiens le cœur palpitant des sensibles humains,  
 Byron, viens en tirer des torrents d' harmonie :  
 C'est pour la vérité que Dieu fit le génie.  
 Jette un cri vers le ciel, ô chantre des enfers !  
 Le ciel même aux damnés envira tes concerts . . .  
 Dédaigne un faux encens qu'on t'offre de si bas :  
 La gloire ne peut être où la vertu n'est pas.’

Matthew Arnold prophesied that 'when the year 1900 is turned, and our nation comes to recount her poetic glories in the century which has then just ended, the first names with her will be these' [Wordsworth and Byron]. The

end of the nineteenth century has long since been reached and passed, but there is still no evidence of such a rehabilitation of Byron as Matthew Arnold prophesied, nor any sign of that ‘inevitable break-up of the old order’ which is to bring the world round to his opinion. Yet Byron’s is a wonderful figure in the first quarter of his century; his personality and his poetry together ‘subjugated’<sup>1</sup> his contemporaries, overwhelmed them oppressed their judgment. The causes of this we have now to inquire into, and elicit by the way the reason for the difference between their estimate and ours.

Byron’s life is on the whole not a pleasant record. His father was—not to put too fine a point upon it—an unmitigated blackguard. His mother alternated caresses with reproaches, and was the most suitable woman that could have been selected not to train the poet. At the age of ten the death of his uncle made him Lord Byron and owner of Newstead Abbey. He was (not to say educated) at Harrow, and afterwards at Trinity College, Cambridge. Then he travelled for two years, and Greece made him a poet. When he returned and had published the record of his journeys in the first two cantos of ‘Childe Harold’ (1812), ‘I awoke one morning and found myself famous.’ He had ‘bet’ Scott on his own ground, as the latter readily admitted, and thus has some of the credit for having driven him to fiction. Byron became the lion of London Society, and sank low in dissipation. In 1815 he married Miss Milbanke; five weeks after the birth of their only child she left him for ever—why has never been certainly known. Society sided with Lady Byron, and in 1816 her husband left England, never to return. His scorn, anger, and desperation found vent in poetry, and in the succeeding years until 1823 all the best of his work was written. During that time he lived in Switzerland and Italy; made and enjoyed the friendship of Shelley, and from 1819 more than the friendship of the Countess Guiccioli, who became, in a sense, his ‘saviour.’ Under the roof of her father, Count Gamba, Byron lived almost

<sup>1</sup> ‘Whatever we may think of him, we shall not be subjugated by him as they were.’—M. Arnold

a domesticated life until, in 1823, the struggle of the Greeks for independence enlisted his sympathies, his energies, and his purse, and in the cause of Greece he died of fever at Missolonghi in April, 1824.

Even such a brief record as the foregoing should help us to understand Byron's poetry, for his best <sup>His Poems.</sup> poetry is his own life 'rimed up.' The mass, the range, the rush, the force, the versatility of his production during the last twelve years of his life are alike remarkable. From the juvenile 'Hours of Idleness' to the crude attack on his critics; from the first two cantos of 'Childe Harold' to the last two, which are virtually a different poem; from his Eastern Tales to the 'Hebrew Melodies'; from the 'Prisoner of Chillon' (Bonnivard, who defended Geneva against the Duke of Savoy) to the dramatic poem 'Manfred'; from the 'Lament of Tasso' (who was imprisoned as a madman at Ferrara because he had dared to love Leonora, the Duke's sister) to the *jeu d'esprit*, 'Beppo'; from 'Marino Faliero,' a historical tragedy, to 'Cain, a mystery'; and from the 'Vision of Judgment,' 'the greatest of modern satires,' to 'Don Juan,' the genius of Byron moved with consummate ease of expression and power of concentration, though not with equal success in each case. It was 'Childe Harold' that first took the world, not England alone, by storm, and the reason is not far to seek. Europe was in the last deadly throes of the struggle with Napoleon, and Byron alone among the poets of that day took what filled the thoughts of every one for the themes of his muse. 'There was not a parish of Great Britain in which there was not some household that had a direct personal interest in the scene of the pilgrim's travels—"some friend, some brother there." . . . Loose and rambling as "Childe Harold" is, it yet had for the time an unconscious art; it entered the absorbing tumult of a hot and feverish struggle, and opened a way in the dark clouds gathering over the combatants through which they could see the blue vault and the shining stars.' But Byron's fame with us and with posterity will rest, among his poems, chiefly on the 'Vision of Judgment' and on his poetical journal of reminiscences,

'Don Juan'; but much more on the most brilliant passages in the whole of his poetry than on any particular poems, for Byron was, as has been well said, 'essentially an occasional poet.' 'If things are farcical,' he said to Trelawny in 1823, 'they will do for "Don Juan"; if heroical, you shall have another canto of "Childe Harold."'" That is to say, the events of his life, as we have said, furnished the material of his best poetry. He thought shallowly, but he felt deeply. What moved him deeply—and his was not a shallow nature for all his mannerisms and affectations—he cast into some too hastily prepared poetic mould, and the result was usually *unequal*. Byron's greatest defects were as an artist: his versification is slovenly; he bestowed sufficient care neither on the conception of his subject as an organic whole, nor on the working out of details. Even Matthew Arnold has to admit: 'Byron is so negligent in his poetical style, he is often, to say the truth, so slovenly, slipshod, and infelicitous, he is so little haunted by the true artist's fine passion for the correct use and consummate management of words, that he may be described as having for this artistic gift the insensibility of the barbarian.' Yet, in spite of all this, William Morris calls him 'the greatest literary power of this century'; he is the poet of conflict, and we cannot do him full justice in these piping times of peace. Then Byron's fame is to fluctuate with peace and war! In any case, there is not yet a sufficient consensus of opinion to make a final verdict possible.

We take as our specimen the opening stanzas of the 'Vision of Judgment,' of which Symonds says: 'His humour, common sense, inventive faculty, and luminous imagination, are here, as nowhere else, combined in perfect fusion.'

Saint Peter sat by the celestial gate:  
His keys were rusty, and the lock was dull,  
So little trouble had been given of late:  
Not that the place by any means was full,  
But since the Gallic era " eighty-eight,"  
The devils had ta'en a longer, stronger pull,  
And " a pull all together," as they say  
At sea—which drew most souls another way.

'The angels all were singing out of tune,  
 And hoarse with having little else to do,  
 Excepting to wind up the sun and moon,  
 Or curb a runaway young star or two,  
 Or wild colt of a comet, which too soon  
 Broke out of bounds o'er the ethereal blue,  
 Splitting some planet with its playful tail,  
 As boats are sometimes by a wanton whale.'

'The guardian seraphs had retired on high,  
 Finding their charges past all care below ;  
 Terrestrial business fill'd nought in the sky  
 Save the recording angel's black bureau ;  
 Who found, indeed, the facts to multiply  
 With such rapidity of vice and woe,  
 That he had stripp'd off both his wings in quills,  
 And yet was in arrear of human ills.'

'His business so augmented of late years,  
 That he was forced, against his will no doubt  
 (Just like those cherubs, earthly ministers),  
 For some resource to turn himself about,  
 And claim the help of his celestial peers,  
 To aid him ere he should be quite worn out,  
 By the increased demand for his remarks.  
 Six angels and twelve saints were named his clerks.'

'This was a handsome board—at least for heaven ;  
 And yet they had even then enough to do,  
 So many conquerors' cars were daily driven,  
 So many kingdoms fitted up anew ;  
 Each day, too, slew its thousands six or seven,  
 Till at the crowning carnage, Waterloo,  
 They threw their pens down in divine disgust,  
 The page was so besmear'd with blood and dust.'

Matthew Arnold, in his somewhat laboured plea for the supremacy of Wordsworth and Byron in 19th century poetry, describes Shelley as a 'beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain.' For one who makes 'criticism of life'<sup>1</sup> the basis of his literary estimates, to place Byron in higher rank than Shelley can only be regarded as the eccentricity of genius. If the reader has any doubt on the point, one other sentence will set his mind at rest:

<sup>1</sup> 'The end and aim of all literature is, if one considers it attentively, nothing but that :—*a criticism of life.*'

'Except for a few short things and single stanzas, his [Shelley's] original poetry is less satisfactory than his translations, for in these the subject-matter was found for him.'<sup>1</sup> After that, we will read this critic's opinions with interest, and judge for ourselves. There are some who go elsewhere for their 'criticism of life' (if life must be criticised), and turn to poetry for the delight born of noble thoughts set to highest verbal music, and to them Shelley is a 'beautiful angel' singing songs often of unearthly beauty and prompting to nobler ideals. The truth is not that Shelley failed to criticise life, but that his criticism was too revolutionary for Arnold.

It is impossible to do justice to Shelley's poetry, from whatever point of view, if we entirely disregard the circumstances of his life. Yet this brings us face to face with a most difficult task: for, without a full exposition of the whole question, such as space and the limitations of a text-book of this kind alike forbid, there is great danger of creating false ideas and misleading impressions. With this caution, we confine ourselves, as far as possible, to a bare chronicle of facts, and in criticism largely to the judgments of acknowledged authorities.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was the most extraordinary son ever born to a wealthy English baronet; the very antithesis and opposite of every tradition, sentiment, and creed of his class seemed to be implanted within him from his early years. At Eton and at University College, Oxford, he was in constant rebellion against established authority, until in 1811 his pamphlet on the 'Necessity of Atheism,' sent to all the heads of colleges with a challenge to refute his heresies, led to his expulsion from the University.<sup>2</sup> In the same year he married Harriet Westbrook, a girl of sixteen, by whom he had two children, and whom he

<sup>1</sup> The next sentence seems too foolish for anything but a foot-note: 'Nay, I doubt whether his delightful Essays and Letters, which deserve to be far more read than they are now, will not resist the wear and tear of time better, and finally come to stand higher, than his poetry.' The reference to Shelley's prose, if taken by itself, is just. His most important prose work is the 'Defence of Poetry' (1820), provoked by his friend Peacock's 'Four Ages of Poetry.'

<sup>2</sup> University College has so far relented as to admit a monument of Shelley within her sacred precincts, and tacitly to acknowledge him the most famous of her sons.

deserted in 1814 for Mary Godwin, daughter of William Godwin, the novelist and political writer. When Harriet drowned herself in the Serpentine two years later, Mary Godwin became Mrs. Shelley, but the Court of Chancery deprived the poet of the custody of his children. In 1818 Shelley left England, and spent the rest of his life in Italy, where he was much in the society of Byron (for the latter's good). In 1822 his boat foundered or was run down, and he and his friend Williams were drowned. His body washed ashore, and was burnt in the presence of Byron, Leigh Hunt, and Trelawny. The life of Shelley lies worlds apart from that of Byron. His treatment of Harriet apart, his private life was not vicious, but, on the contrary, in many respects exemplary. As far as the ideas which he sang were capable of application to life, he applied them in his own conduct. "He preached the equality of man, and he proved that he was willing to practise it." He was generous and benevolent to a fault.

The golden period of Shelley's productiveness was the last four years of his life. Up to 1818 he had written immature verse,—a unique copy of his earliest poetry, 'Poems by Victor and Cazire,' was only recovered in 1898,—'Queen Mab,' 'Alastor' and 'Laon and Cythna' (1817; on the tyrannies of politics and creeds, and the supposed effective method of suppressing them), the last-named republished with omissions the following year as 'The Revolt of Islam'; but almost all of his poetry that we could worst spare belongs to 1818 and after. 'Julian and Maddalo' are Shelley and Byron, and the poem reports one of their conversations. The conjunction is significant. The two poets in their different ways represent two sides of the French Revolution: Byron its backward, destructive side; Shelley its, unfortunately less prominent, forward, reconstructive, idealist side. 'If in Byron one side of the Revolution displays itself with power, that which is more materialistic and more personal, the assertion of unbounded egoism and the rights of the individual, in Shelley appears the reverse side, that which is more ideal, more religious, its tendency to merge the personal life in a larger life which is impersonal, whether the life of humanity or of

external nature.' Of his longer works, the most perfect are the two lyric 'Greek' dramas, 'Prometheus Unbound' and 'Hellas,' the latter a dream of rejuvenated Greece and the world generally prompted by the uprising of the Greeks against the Turks. 'Adonais' is an elegy on the death of Keats, whose death Shelley supposed to have resulted from a savage review of his 'Endymion' in the *Quarterly Review*. The 'Witch of Atlas' and 'Epipsychidion' stand on about the same poetic level as 'Adonais.' But Shelley is nowhere greater than in his many detached or detachable shorter lyrical pieces, among which may be named 'The Skylark,' 'The Cloud,' 'To Constantia Singing,' 'Ode to the West Wind,' 'Rarely, rarely, comest thou,' 'The Ode to Liberty,' and 'To Night' (quoted below).

The extremes of Shelley criticism may be represented by the sentences quoted from Matthew Arnold <sup>Appreciation.</sup> above (p. 665), and the following from Swinburne: 'He was alone the perfect singing-god; his thoughts, words, deeds, all sang together.... The master singer of our modern race and age; the poet beloved above all other poets, being beyond all other poets—in one word, and the only proper word—divine.' The difference is chiefly one of point of view: Arnold finds 'in his poetry the incurable want, in general, of a sound subject-matter, and the incurable fault, in consequence, of unsubstantiality. Those who extol him as the poet of clouds, the poet of sunsets, are only saying that he did not, in fact, lay hold upon the poet's right subject-matter; and in honest truth, with all his charm of soul and spirit, and with all his gift of musical diction and movement, he never, or hardly ever, did.' In a word, Mr. Arnold finds in him no criticism of life. On the other hand, Swinburne cares above all things for the melody and music of verse, and these he finds in Shelley's divine lyric gift. But there is a 'via media,' a sane mean of criticism. Still better, there is a blessed faculty of going to each poet for the best that *he* can give us, with thankfulness and praise. No one will accuse Herford of anything but sane,

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<sup>1</sup> Cp. 'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,  
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.'—'Don Juan,' xi. 59.

sound, impartial judgments. ‘The question (he writes) with which the “Triumph of Life” abruptly closes, “Then what is life, I cried”—remained for ever unanswered in speech of his. Shelley’s own life was one of those which most preclude an unworthy answer to it. None of his contemporaries lived from first to last so completely under the dominance of “soul-light”; his errors in conduct and weaknesses in art were alike rooted in this supreme quality.’ His boyish resolve had been

‘I will be wise,  
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies  
Such power, for I grow weary to behold  
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise  
Without reproach or check,’

and he carried it out. Shelley was a revolutionary, but he was also a transcendental, poet. If the one quality repels us, the other should equally attract. If he lived in an unpractical, ethereal world, his poetry is drawing many souls upwards to hold communion with him there. As Scott is the poet of the romantic past, Shelley is the poet of the glorious future. In Byron the intellect is supreme and the imagination subordinate; in Shelley the intellect is servant to the imagination. With eyes fixed on the splendid apparitions with which he peopled space, he went through the world not seeing the high road, stumbling over the stones of the road side.

‘As a poet,’ says J. A. Symonds, ‘Shelley contributed a new quality to English literature—a quality of ideality, freedom, and spiritual audacity, which severe critics of other nations think we lack. Byron’s daring is in a different region: his elemental worldliness and pungent satire do not liberate our energies, or cheer us with new hopes and splendid vistas. Wordsworth, the very antithesis to Shelley in his reverent accord with institutions, suits our meditative mood, sustains us with a sound philosophy, and braces us by a healthy contact with the Nature he so dearly loved. But in Wordsworth there is none of Shelley’s magnetism. What remains of permanent value in Coleridge’s poetry—such works as ‘Christabel,’ the ‘Ancient Mariner,’ or ‘Kubla Khan’—is a product of pure

artistic fancy, tempered by the author's mysticism. Keats, true and sacred poet as he was, loved Nature with a somewhat sensuous devotion . . . nor did he share the prophetic fire which burns in Shelley's verse. In none of Shelley's greatest contemporaries was the lyrical faculty so paramount; and whether we consider his minor songs, his odes, or his more complicated choral dramas, we acknowledge that he was the loftiest and the most spontaneous singer of our language. In range of power he was also conspicuous above the rest. . . . While his genius was so varied, and its flight so unapproached in swiftness, it would be vain to deny that Shelley, as an artist, had faults from which the men with whom I have compared him were more free. The most prominent of these are haste, incoherence, verbal carelessness, incompleteness, a want of narrative force, and a weak hold on objective realities.'

Our selections are some stanzas from 'Adonais,' and the exquisite little song 'To Night.'

'He has outsoared the shadow of our night;  
 Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,  
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,  
 Can touch him not and torture not again;  
 From the contagion of the world's slow stain  
 He is secure, and now can never mourn  
 A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;  
 Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,  
 With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

'He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;  
 Mourn not for Adonais—Thou, young Dawn,  
 Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee  
 The spirit thou lamentest is not gone,  
 Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!  
 Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,  
 Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown  
 O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare  
 Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

'He is made one with Nature: there is heard  
 His voice in all her music, from the moan  
 Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;  
 He is a presence to be felt and known  
 In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,

Spreading itself where'er that Power may move  
 Which has withdrawn his being to its own ;  
 Which wields the world with never wearied love,  
 Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

' He is a portion of the loveliness  
 Which once he made more lovely.'

' Swiftly walk over the western wave,  
 Spirit of Night !  
 Out of the misty eastern cave,  
 Where all the long and lone daylight  
 Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,  
 Which make thee terrible and dear,—  
 Swift be thy flight !

' Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,  
 Star-inwrought !  
 Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day ;  
 Kiss her until she be wearied out,  
 Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,  
 Touching all with thine opiate wand—  
 Come, long sought !

' When I arose and saw the dawn,  
 I sighed for thee ;  
 When light rode high, and the dew was gone,  
 And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,  
 And the weary Day turned to his rest,  
 Lingering like an unloved guest,  
 I sighed for thee.

' Thy brother Death came, and cried,  
 Wouldst thou me ?  
 Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,  
 Murmured like a noon-tide bee,  
 Shall I nestle near thy side ?  
 Wouldst thou me ?—And I replied,  
 No, not thee !

' Death will come when thou art dead,  
 Soon, too soon—  
 Sleep will come when thou art fled ;  
 Of neither would I ask the boon  
 I ask of thee, beloved Night—  
 Swift be thine approaching flight,  
 Come soon, soon ! '

Keats (like Shelley's ashes) lies in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, and on his grave, by his own desire, is the inscription: 'Hero lies one whose name was writ in water.' 'Posterity has agreed with him that it is,' adds Saintsbury, 'but in the Water of Life.' John Keats came <sup>Keats</sup> of unpoetical parentage; his father was em-  
<sub>1795-1821.</sub> ployed in livery stables in London. He is therefore, like his master, Spenser, a cockney poet. It is impossible to conceive of circumstances of birth and upbringing being more completely belied. The cockney poet becomes the modern singer of Greece; the surgeon's apprentice becomes the apostle of beauty, the founder of the Tennysonian school of flawless workmanship. Keats gave promise in his surgical studies, but they were distasteful to him, and in the year that his first volume of 'Poems' (1817) appeared he abandoned them. In 1818 came 'Endymion,' insolently reviewed in the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood*. The latter informed Keats that a 'starved apothecary was better than a starved poet,' and called his poem 'calm, settled, imperturbable, drivelling idiotey.' Not these reviews, as Shelley supposed, but the deadly malady consumption, led to the poet's early death. In a volume of 1820 all his most perfect work appeared. In the fall of that year he sailed for Naples with his friend Severn, who tended him with a woman's devotion until his death at Rome in February, 1821.

Keats's genius, like Shelley's, matured with astounding rapidity, and especially his artistic perception <sup>His Poems.</sup> and execution. 'Endymion,' an adaptation of the classical myth of Endymion and the Moon to the poet and his pursuit of beauty, has little to recommend it beyond its wealth of phrase and imagery, and these very excellences by their excess turn to defects. It shows a desire for mere prettinesses of diction, an intemperate use of ornament, a striving after verbal effect at the expense of thought. But if we turn to his later Greek fragment, 'Hyperion,' which Byron pronounced 'as sublime as Aeschylus,' we find the faults of the earlier poem chastened and toned down into something like Attic severity and simplicity. 'Lamia' is founded on the story

of a young man wedded to a serpent which had assumed the form of a beautiful woman. 'Isabella, or the Pot of Basil,' was Keats's contribution to a volume of 'Tales from Boccaccio,' planned with his friend Reynolds, and shows what he could do in poetic narrative. 'The Eve of St. Agnes' approaches most nearly, among his complete poems, to the perfect standard attained in the six 'Odes' and in the pick of the 'Sonnets.' The word 'perfect' is no exaggeration; absolutely perfect in conception, in execution, are the best of the odes and sonnets.

What might not this genius of twenty-five have accomplished if he had lived? His early death was the greatest loss that English poetry ever suffered, for he had learnt more of his art, of discipline and self-restraint, between 'Endymion' and the 'Odes' than any other English poet ever learnt, we may safely say, in the same space of time. To

Keats on remove some popular misconceptions on this himself. and other points, let us quote a few sentences of his own: 'Oh for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts.' 'Knowing within myself the manner in which this poem ["Endymion"] has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public. What manner I mean will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished.' 'I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of Great Men.' 'I could not live without the love of my friends; I would jump down Etna for any great public good—but I hate a mawkish popularity.' 'Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works. My own criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict; and also, when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reperception and ratification of what is fine.' 'I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good to the world.' 'There is but one way for me.

The road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it.' 'The best sort of poetry—that is all I care for, all I live for.' 'If I should die, I have left no immortal work behind me—nothing to make my friends proud of my memory; but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things.' Or, in the concluding lines of his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,'

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Note the advance from 'Oh, for a life of sensations!' <sup>Appreciation.</sup> to 'I have loved the principle of beauty in all things.' People make the absurd mistake of judging Keats as if we possessed anything but what would be the *juvenilia* of other poets. Compare his work with that of the first twenty-five years of the life of any other English poet, of Byron or Shelley for example, and he has nothing to fear from the comparison. Like Shelley, Keats is an inspired poet. 'The mood which all artists require, covet, and find most rare,' was the common mood with him. The lives of many poets have to be set in the opposite scale to their poetry; the life of Keats tells into his poetry, enriches it, makes it more fully comprehensible. To say that he lacked the self-restraint and self-castigation necessary for choice and for rejection, for balance and for proportion, which must accompany the divine gift, is not wholly true, and, if true, is only to say that his poetic art was not fully matured. Impassioned admiration of Greek sculpture, especially in the Elgin marbles, gave a more potent turn to Keats's poetry than any other external influence. Byron recognised this when he spoke of him as having

‘without Greek  
Contrived to talk about the gods of late  
Much as they might have been supposed to speak.’

In spite of his ignorance of Greek, he was as near to the Greek spirit as any Englishman has ever been. Lastly, he was a true 'romantic' in his love of Nature. 'Keats discovers,' says Bridges, 'in the most usual objects either beauty or sources of delight or comfort, or sometimes even

of imaginative horror, which are all new; and here his originality seems inexhaustible, and his wide poetic sympathies the strongest. Nor does he confine himself to matters of which he could have had much experience; he makes Nature the object of his imaginative faculty—Nature apart from man, or related to man as an enchantress to a dreamer.'

### ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE.

- My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
    My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
    One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :  
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
    But being too happy in thy happiness,—  
    That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,  
        In some melodious plot  
    Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
        Singest of summer in full-throated ease.
- Oh ! for a draught of vintage, that hath been  
    Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
    Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth !  
Oh ! for a beaker full of the warm South,  
    Full of the true, the blushing Hippocrene,  
    With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
        And purpled-stained mouth ;  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
    And with thee fade away into the forest dim ;
- Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
    What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
    Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,  
    Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies,  
    Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
        And leaden-eyed despairs,  
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
    Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.
- Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,  
    Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
    Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :

Already with thee ! tender is the night,  
 And hapy the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
 Clustered around by all her starry fays ;  
 But here there is no light,  
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blow'd.  
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways

' I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
 But in embalmed darkness guess each sweet  
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;  
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;  
 Fast fading violets covered up in leaves ;  
 And mid-May's eldest child,  
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

' Darkling I listen ; and for many a time  
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
 Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
 To take into the air my quiet breath ;  
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
 In such an ecstasy !  
 Still wouldest thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
 To thy high requiem become a sod.

' Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird !  
 No hungry generations tread thee down ;  
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
 In ancient days by emperor and clown ;  
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth when sick for home  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;  
 The same that oft-times hath  
 Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam  
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

' Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell  
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self !  
 Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
 As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.  
 Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades  
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
 Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep  
 In the next valley glades :  
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?  
 Fled is that music :—Do I wake or sleep ?'

That 'grand old pagan,' Walter Savage Landor, published his first volume of 'Poems' in 1795, his last 1775—1864. volume of 'Imaginary Conversations' in 1853, and 'Heroic Idylls' in 1863. He belongs to our present period, however, though he overlaps it at both ends. The romantic interest that should attach to Landor's life and literary work has been repelled, in the one case by his unamiable or eccentric character,—'his most intimate friendships were states of unstable equilibrium,'—in the other case more inexplicably. No man who commands such a consensus of distinguished praise is so neglected as Landor. Swinburne says that no English writer since Milton has attained to equal excellence in *both* verse and prose, and writes of him (in a private letter) as 'a man whom I am convinced that future times will always regard as one of the great English Classics in poetry as in prose—and not less certainly as one of the noblest and loftiest characters in the history of letters.' Yet the reading public has so far falsified the prediction. Coleridge asked in 1834: 'What it is that Landor wants to make him a poet? His powers are certainly very considerable, but he seems to be totally deficient in that modifying faculty which compresses several units into one whole. The truth is that he does not possess imagination in its highest form. Hence his poems, taken as wholes, are unintelligible; you have eminences excessively bright, and all the ground around and between them is darkness. Besides which he has never learned with all his energy how to write simple and lucid English.' The simple fact seems to be that Landor is too severely classical, too Greek, to be popular in our present state of culture. He emulated Gray in his 'extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical.' 'If I could resemble Pindar in nothing else,' wrote Landor, 'I was resolved to be as compendious and exclusive.' The consequence is, his longer poems are not read; but fortunately his 'little language' is his best. Of his shorter pieces, which will not readily be allowed to die, we quote Lamb's favourite, 'Rose Aylmer.'

'Ah what avails the sceptred race,  
Ah what the form divine!'

What every virtue, every grace !  
 Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

'Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes  
 May weep, but never see,  
 A night of memories and of sighs  
 I consecrate to thee.'

The foregoing are the poetic giants of the period; of the rest much less need be said. Time has not been kind to Thomas Campbell's reputation. His 1777-1844. 'Pleasures of Hope' (1799) ran through four editions in one year. It is the most extraordinary blend of romantic subject-matter, the aspirations of an ardent revolutionist, with eighteenth century versification. 'Gertrude of Wyoming' is a narrative poem in the Spenserian stanza (not well suited for narrative), relating the fortunes of a family settled by the Susquehanna, and the destruction of the village of Wyoming by a band of Indians. These things are now neither read nor highly esteemed, and for this reason: they are not inspired. They are the productions of Campbell's workshop. On the other hand, his martial lyrics and some of his ballads have the true touch of inspiration. In 1800 Campbell had gone to the Continent, and 'caught the fever of militarism,' following in the train of armies and hovering round fields of battle. Out of these experiences and his feeling of patriotism arose his three masterpieces, 'Ye Mariners of England' (1801), 'Hohenlinden' (1803), 'Battle of the Baltic' (1809). These, in spite of 'polishing,' and in spite of some crudities of expression—no one has ever found out the meaning of the first two lines quoted below—take rank in their class next to Drayton's 'Battle of Agincourt' by dint of their martial movement and felicities of phrase. Two or three stanzas, taken from the 'Battle of the Baltic' and the 'Soldier's Dream,' will suffice to show Campbell at about his best.

'But the might of England flushed  
 To anticipate the scene,  
 And her van the fleetest rushed  
 O'er the deadly space between.  
 "Hearts of oak," our captains cried, when each gun

From its adamantine lips  
 Spread a death-shade round the ships,  
 Like the hurricane eclipse  
 Of the sun.'

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'Then pledged we the wine cup, and fondly I swore  
 From my home and my weeping friends never to part,  
 My little ones kissed me a thousand times o'er,  
 And my wife sobbed aloud in her fulness of heart:  
 'Stay, stay with us, rest, thou art weary and worn';  
 And faint was their war-broken soldier to stay;  
 But sorrow returned with the dawning of morn,  
 And the voice in my dreaming ear melted away.'

If this chapter made any pretence of being chronological (which it does not), George Crabbe would have come at its head, for when our period opens he was taking a twenty-two years' rest from publication. He was born at the charming little Suffolk watering-place of Aldeburgh, where his memory is commemorated by an indifferent bust in the church; became first a surgeon, and later (after he had been saved from a debtor's prison by Burke) curate, in his native-place; was presented to two small livings by Lord Chancellor Thurlow, who told him with an oath 'he was as like Parson Adams [in "Joseph Andrews"] as twelve to a dozen'; was silent, after his 'Newspaper' (1785), for twenty-two years, though he had periodical 'incremations' of manuscript; returned to still more successful poetry with his 'Parish Register' in 1807; and died at a good old age, famous and at peace with all men, even with the author of the parody of the 'Parish Register' in 'Rejected Addresses,' Horace Smith. Up to 1785 Crabbe was writing on in the old, faded style, applauded by Johnson. His 'Library' (1781) is a smooth, almost witnessless imitation of Pope; indeed he has been called a 'Pope in worsted stockings.' His 'Village', representing his highest level in the eighteenth century, is quite devoid of any trace of naturalism; he is as severe as the Knight of La Mancha in his aversion from all romance. When he begins again, more than fifty years old, to publish poetry, the only trace of the influence of the romantic revival is seen in the greater play allowed to the poet's fancy. He is 'our chief realist

Crabbe,  
 1754-1832.

poet.' Byron called him 'Nature's sternest poet, yet the best.' Hazlitt characterised his work with more discrimination: 'His tales turn one and all on the same sort of teasing, helpless, unimaginative distress.' When Crabbe justified his method by Pope's example, 'Nothing,' said Hazlitt, 'can be more dissimilar. Pope describes what is striking, Crabbe would have described merely what was there. In Pope there was an appeal to the imagination; you see what was passing in a poetical point of view.' Narrative poetry lends itself to weak lines; Crabbe is at times weaker than Wordsworth at his weakest. The line that both Tennyson and Fitzgerald claimed to have composed in parody of Wordsworth,

'A Mr Wilkinson, a clergyman,'  
would have been no parody of Crabbe.

#### FROM THE 'PARISH REGISTER.'

'To pomp and pageantry in nought allied,  
A noble peasant, Isaac Ashford died.  
Noble he was, contemning all things mean,  
His truth unquestioned, and his soul serene:  
Of no man's presence Isaac felt afraid,  
At no man's question Isaac looked dismayed:  
Shame knew him not, he dreaded no disgrace:  
Truth, simple truth, was written in his face;  
Yet while the serious thought his soul approved,  
Cheerful he seemed and gentleness he loved:  
To bliss domestic he his heart resigned,  
And, with the firmest, had the fondest mind:  
Were others joyful, he looked smiling on,  
And gave allowance where he needed none;  
Good he refused with future ill to buy,  
Nor knew a joy that caused reflection's sigh;  
A friend to virtue, his unclouded breast  
No envy stung, no jealousy distressed;  
(Bane of the poor! it wounds their weaker mind,  
To miss one favour which their neighbours find:)  
Yet far was he from stoic pride removed;  
He felt humanely, and he warmly loved:  
I marked his action when his infant died,  
And his old neighbour for offence was tried;  
The still tears, stealing down that furrowed cheek,  
Spoke pity plainer than the tongue can speak.'

Robert Southey's is one of the most highly and rightly honoured names in the roll of English men of letters. His life is a record of hard, conscientious, not over-well rewarded toil. His output was tremendous, though he was not a very rapid worker; the list of his books and articles nearly fills six closely printed pages; his poems run to eight-hundred pages in double columns. His most famous prose-work is his 'Life of Nelson', still a classic. He was laureate for the last thirty years of his life; for the last forty years he lived at Greta Hall near Keswick. Four years before his death he had softening of the brain, the cumulative effect of a life of unremitting labour. Like Wordsworth, he found his greatest happiness in his home. His friend, Sir Henry Taylor, but does Southey justice when he says: 'There were greater poets in his generation, and there were men of a deeper and more far-reaching philosophic faculty; but take him for all in all,—his ardent and genial piety, his moral strength, the magnitude and variety of his powers, the field which he covered in literature, and the beauty of his life,—it may be said of him, justly and with no straining of the truth, that of all his contemporaries he was the greatest MAN.'

After that, and still more after Byron's castigation, we can forgive Southey his laureate 'Vision of Judgment,' which represents his low water-mark in poetry. Of his

*His Poetry.* long narrative poems, 'Thalaba the Destroyer' (1801), 'Madoc' (1805), 'The Curse of Kehama' (1810), 'Roderick the last of the Goths' (1814), the last-named is the best; but the best lacks inspiration; they smell of the lamp. As has been brilliantly remarked, "Roderick" illustrates Wordsworth's theory of poetic language far better than his own practice.'

Southey is not easy to sample in short space; everyone knows the 'Battle of Blenheim' and we therefore give

#### STANZAS WRITTEN IN HIS LIBRARY.

' My days among the Dead are passed;  
    Around me I behold,  
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,  
    The mighty minds of old;

My never failing friends are they,  
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal,  
And seek relief in woe;  
And while I understand and feel  
How much to them I owe,  
My cheeks have often been bedewed  
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead, with them  
I live in long-past years,  
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,  
Partake their hopes and fears,  
And from their lessons seek and find  
Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the Dead, anon  
My place with them will be,  
And I with them shall travel on  
Through all futurity;  
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,  
That will not perish in the dust.'

'Romances and novels in verse,' said De Quincey, 'constitute the poetry which is *immediately* successful; and that is a poetry, it may be added, which, being successful through one generation, afterwards is unsuccessful for ever.' 'Novels in verse' or narrative poems were written at this time by Scott, Byron, Campbell, Southey, and Moore, and the destiny which De Quincey predicted has overtaken all their narrative verse, except Scott's and Moore's. Thomas Moore lives in poetic history 1779-1852. by three works: his 'Irish Melodies,' in which his Celtic enthusiasm and patriotism are suppressed—in deference to his English drawing-room patrons; his 'Lalla Rookh' (tulip cheek), a collection of Persian tales, of which 'Paradise and the Peri' is the best known; and the 'Fudge Family in Paris,' a satire on the Englishman abroad. He wrote also the well known Lives of Sheridan and Byron. Moore was a clever versifier, who caught the ear of the society of his day with sentimental verse of sweet smoothness, such as now abounds in provincial newspapers and magazines. Moore could write this sort of thing *ad libitum*:

'Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,  
 Which I gaze on so fondly to-day,  
 Were to change by to-morrow, and fleet in my arms,  
 Like fairy-gifts fading away,  
 Thou wouldst still be ador'd, as this moment thou art,  
 Let thy loveliness fade as it will,  
 And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart  
 Would entwine itself verdantly still.'

James Henry Leigh Hunt was the intimate associate of Leigh Hunt, far greater men, among others of Byron, 1784-1859. Shelley, and Keats. Keats owed much to him in the way of friendship, and not a little in the way of his art. This association with greater men has been extended from life to literature (indeed it was from the first in part literary), and, combined with some 'ill luck' both in life and in fame,<sup>1</sup> has depreciated Hunt below his deserts. And his deserts, in the literary sense, were never very great. 'His chief function in literature,' says a critic 'was to further the ease, vivacity, and grace, of which, though in a far choicer kind, Lamb was a master in prose, and Chaucer and Ariosto in verse.' From 1811 to 1813 he was in prison for calling the Regent 'a fat Adonis of fifty,' and there he wrote his longest poem, 'The Story of Rimini.' But he is at his best in shorter pieces, in his translations from the Italian, and in 'Abou Ben Adhem.' He was a versatile writer, and played many parts besides that of poet,—journalist, novelist, biographer, auto-biographer, essayist, and critic.

Samuel Rogers, though the junior of Crabbe, has the better claim to be regarded as the *doyen* of the Rogers, 1763-1855. romantic school, to which Crabbe never gave in his adherence. Rogers was a less original and less noteworthy poet; but he swam with the current. He was a wealthy banker, at whose house many of the most famous *literati* of the day met, and to their swelling themes he played a somewhat feeble accompaniment. He felt the romantic influences, but his response to them

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<sup>1</sup> 'In spite of Dickens's passionately repentant repudiation, it is still the fashion in certain circles to declare that the selfish, hypocritical sponger, Harold Skimpole [in "Bleak House"], is a portrait of Leigh Hunt drawn from the life by one who knew him well.'

was neither ready nor strongly marked. His earlier poems—he was composing over a period of forty-nine years—are in heroic couplets, and are marked by a good deal of Popian polish and refining; his longest poem, 'Italy,' is in blank verse, but not written with less laborious care. Every one knows the story of 'Ginevra' (in 'Italy').

James Hogg, the 'Ettrick Shepherd' and eccentric bard, <sup>Hogg, 1772-1835.</sup> was a *protégé* of Scott's, who was introduced to him when he was 'raiding' in the interests of his 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.' Herford is of opinion that he surpassed his sponsor in ultimate poetical quality. His best work, the 'Queen's Wake,' in rivalry of Scott's 'Minstrelsy,' is a collection of ballads set in an ingenious framework. Hogg was one of the projectors of 'Maga' (1817), and figured in its pages as one of the interlocutors in Wilson's 'Noctes Ambrosianae' (1822-33).

Robert Bloomfield (1766-1823) and John Clare (1793-1864) were alike in their humble rustic origin, in receiving their first inspiration from Thomson's 'Seasons,' and in the bucolic character of their poetry; the 'Farmer's Boy' (1798) of the former and the 'Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery' (1820) of the latter are their best known works. A far more deservedly famous godson

<sup>Elliott, 1781-1849.</sup> of Thomson was Ebenezer Elliott of Sheffield, the 'Corn-Law Rhymer,' another 'uneducated poet.' He began as a singer of Nature in 'The Vernal Walk' (1798); but the wrongs and sufferings of the poor toilers among whom he lived recalled him to be their knight in the poetic lists, where he championed them 'to the utterance'—did, it may be said, for political reform what Hood did for social reform. His 'Corn-Law Rhymes,' are said to have materially assisted in producing that revolt of the manufacturing population of the British Islands against the Corn Laws, which induced their final abrogation in 1846. Dowden, in his sympathetic appreciation, sums up Elliott's poetic achievement in one sentence: 'Elliott's imagination was ambitious, and imperfectly trained: he accordingly dealt with large and passionate themes, entering into them with complete *abandon*; and he was hurried on

to passages of genuine inspiration ; real heights and depths were within his range ; heavenly lights alternate with nether darkness.' We must find room for one verse :

‘ When wilt Thou save the people ?  
O God of mercy, when ?  
Not kings and lords, but nations !  
Not thrones and crowns, but men !  
Flowers of thy heart, O God, are they ;  
Let them not pass like weeds away —  
Their heritage a sunless day.  
God save the people ! ’

The two men with whom we close this chapter belong in part, probably more than any others we have mentioned,

<sup>Hood,</sup> to Victorian poetry. ‘ Tom ’ Hood’s best and <sup>1798-1845.</sup> most famous pieces, ‘ The Song of the Shirt ’ and ‘ The Bridge of Sighs,’ date from but a short time before his death in 1845 ; and it is only the chronological fact that before 1832 he had won lasting poetic fame by his ‘ Hero and Leander,’ ‘ Plea of the Midsummer Fairies,’ ‘ Dream of Eugene Aram,’ and other pieces, that leads to his inclusion here. On the contrary, although John Keble,

<sup>Keble,</sup> then vicar of Hursley in Hampshire, was publishing poetry as late as 1847, his one famous work, ‘ The Christian Year,’ appeared in 1827. Keble was associated with Newman and Pusey in the leadership of the Oxford movement. Keble was a religious poet—no mere hymn-writer. ‘ The Christian Year ’ shows him three parts of the way on the journey from pantheism to sacerdotalism.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

PROSE 1798-1832 A.D.

As Wordsworth towers above the poetry of this period, so does Sir Walter Scott above its prose. Not that in Scott. absolute merit on the formal side of their art either Wordsworth is the equal of Shelley or Scott of Lamb, but that their position in the history of the developments of literature, their importance in relation to later poetry and prose respectively, is supreme.<sup>1</sup> As compared with Scott, Lamb was a childless genius. In the two preceding chapters something has been said of the history of prose fiction at this epoch and an outline given of Scott's life. Here therefore our concern is his prose, which we shall not greatly wrong if we limit it to the 'Waverley Novels.'

According to Scott's own account, he had been led to write his earlier romances in verse, instead of in prose, by a series of accidents. 'His poems were therefore a casual The genesis of and temporary deviation from the main purpose 'Waverley.' of his life.' As early as 1800 or thereabouts he had written a chapter of a tale of chivalry in the manner of Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto'; as he humorously says, 'those who complain, not unreasonably, of the profusion of the tales which have followed "Waverley" may bless their

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<sup>1</sup> 'For sixteen years,' says Herford in his altogether admirable 'Age of Wordsworth,' 'the wonderful series of the "Scotch Novels," as they were called, issued from the Ballantynes' press without a pause; and for the last ten at least, their appearance was watched for as eagerly in Paris and Weimar as in London. The poems had thrown the British world into passing excitement; the novels enlarged the intellectual horizon of all Europe, created in half a dozen nations the novel of national life, and opened a new epoch in the study of history. Hazlitt, who long refused to read the great Tory's tales, and then said the finest things in the world about them, hardly overstated the difference when he declared that "the poems were received as fashionable and well-dressed acquaintances: we are ready to tear the others in pieces as old friends."

stars at the narrow escape they have made, by the commencement of the inundation being postponed for fifteen years later.' After the publication of the 'Lay of the last Minstrel' in 1805, Scott wrote about the first seven chapters of 'Waverley,' which was advertised by Ballantyne as about to appear under the title of 'Waverley, or 'tis *Fifty* years since,' which was altered in 1814 to 'Sixty.' A friend, to whom he submitted these opening chapters describing Waverley's education in romantic literature ('the passages concerning whose course of reading were imitated from recollections of my own,' says Scott), not unnaturally deemed them to be unworthy of Scott's then reputation. Scott sometimes turned his thoughts to the continuation of the romance, but 'I could not find what I had already written, and was too indolent to attempt to write it anew from memory. Two circumstances in particular recalled my recollection of the mislaid manuscript. The first was the extended and well-merited fame of Miss Edgeworth.'<sup>1</sup> The second was the fact that Scott completed in some fashion a romance left unfinished by Joseph Strutt, 'Queenhoo Hall.' At length, in 1814, when searching for fishing tackle, Scott found the lost manuscript, and completed the story in four weeks. All this proves conclusively—and the conclusion is worth emphasizing—that he did not take to prose fiction *because*, as he himself put it, Byron had 'bet him' in poetry.

'Waverley,' thus introduced to the world anonymously, The 'Waverley gave its name to the wonderful series of twenty-  
Novels,' nine works produced in the next seventeen  
1814-31. years. The authorship, though known to some twenty private friends, and though it was long a passion of the reading world to discover it, remained a secret until 1827, when it was divulged at the Theatrical Fund Dinner.

<sup>1</sup> Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), the Irish novelist, was, like Miss Austen, Scott's predecessor in fiction. Her novels, of which 'Belinda,' 'Castle Rackrent,' and 'The Absentee' are the best, though vividly portraying Irish life and character, are partly marred by a too obtrusive moral, social, or educational purpose. 'Thus she became, in some sense, both a doctrinaire Miss Austen, and an Irish, yet prosaic, Sir Walter.' Scott praised her 'rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact.' When staying at Abbotsford she repaid the compliment very effectively. 'You see how it is: Dean Swift said he had written his books in order that people might learn to treat him like a great lord. Sir Walter writes his in order that he may be able to treat his people as a great lord ought to do.'

Scott went almost absurd lengths in order to keep the secret, quoting from his own poetry, and apparently reviewing his own novels in the *Quarterly* on the appearance of 'Old Mortality' (1816). But in reality the latter was a double-dyed deception: he merely copied out Erskine's article for mystification, as he states himself in the Introduction to the 'Chronicles of the Canongate' (1827).

The following classification of the Waverley Novels was made by the late Mr. T. B. Shaw: I. HISTORY.

Classified.

(i.) Scottish:—'Waverley' (the period of the Pretender's attempt in 1745), 'Legend of Montrose' (the Civil War in the 17th century), 'Old Mortality' (the rebellion of the Covenanters), 'Monastery' and 'Abbot' (the deposition and imprisonment of Mary Queen of Scots), 'Fair Maid of Perth' (the reign of Robert III.), 'Castle Dangerous' (the time of the Black Douglas). (ii.) English: 'Ivanhoe' (the return of Richard Cœur de Lion from the Holy Land), 'Kenilworth' (the reign of Elizabeth), 'Fortunes of Nigel' (reign of James I.), 'Peveril of the Peak' (reign of Charles II.; period of the pretended Catholic plot), 'Betrothed' (the wars of the Welsh Marches), 'Talisman' (the third Crusade: Richard Cœur de Lion), 'Woodstock' (the Civil War and Commonwealth). (iii.) Continental: 'Quentin Durward' (Louis XI. and Charles the Bold), 'Anne of Geierstein' (the epoch of the battle of Nancy), 'Count Robert of Paris' (the Crusaders at Byzantium). II. PRIVATE LIFE AND MIXED:—'Guy Mannering,' 'Antiquary,' 'Black Dwarf,' 'Rob Roy,' 'Heart of Midlothian,' 'Bride of Lammermoor,' 'Pirate,' 'St. Ronan's Well,' 'Redgauntlet,' 'Surgeon's Daughter,' 'Two Drovers,' 'Highland Widow.'

The idea of treating historical material in the novel was not new, as has been seen. Yet Scott is rightly esteemed the creator of the historical novel proper, because he was the first to respect the truth of history, to convey on the whole sufficiently accurate impressions of historical events and of the social life of a particular age, while combining with these in one narrative fictitious characters and incidents. In a word, the historical novel in his hands became a genuine work of literary art, and the conditions which he imposed upon it

were accepted as the canons of that class of composition. It would be out of place here to discuss the degree of historical truth to which Scott attained.<sup>1</sup> It is enough to remember that he had no predecessor with whom he can even be compared, and to point out that where, in subsequent works, a far greater degree of historical accuracy has been attained, the result has usually been less pleasing, less artistic, less successful as literature and as fiction. 'In speed of production combined with variety and depth of interest, and weight and accuracy of historical substance, Scott is still unrivalled.'

The Waverley Novels owe their exalted position to two pre-eminent qualities : the truth of the characters and the harmonious development of the plots. Scott was the first to show how much the mingling of invention with historical truth can effect, when each completes and interpenetrates the other, and how much the novel may gain by the combination. This may have been at first the result of a happy chance, but even then it was a stroke of genius. Extravagant critics have placed Scott on a level with Shakespeare, as if they could be compared in depth of feeling and in creative originality ; but one thing at least they had in common and in equal measure—healthiness of spirit and, consequently, dislike of all artificiality. All Scott's characters are genuinely drawn from life ; they are real men and women, *not* personifications or abstractions or attempts at the solution of psychological problems masquerading in human garb. The historical personages that pass before us, in his pages represent the most diverse classes and peoples,—Richard the Lion-heart and Louis XI., Cromwell and Charles the Bold, Rob Roy, Rochester, and Montrose, Cavaliers and Roundheads, pirates and astrologers, court-ladies and fortunetellers ; yet all appear real and natural, and accord so well with their surroundings, their time, and with historical tradition, that the mind of the reader is satisfied with what he feels to be, on the one hand a work of art, and on the other the essential truth of history. The clearness of

<sup>1</sup> The reader interested in this line of investigation is referred to W. N. Senior's 'Essays on Fiction.'

the total impression is secured by the harmonious grouping of the characters and by the due subordination of all parts to the main action. Moreover, Scott, like Shakespeare, does not generalise from the individual, but individualises the class, and thus renders his portraits, as every great artist must, true types of character. Herein lie at once the high moral and the high artistic value of his fictions. Not one of them is a moral problem, excogitated in order to prove the truth of a favourite theory ; but all the teachings of life and experience are there, as in life itself, without one of them being dragged into undue prominence.

On one side Scott's genius is in kinship with Wordsworth's—in the beauty and correctness of his landscapes. descriptions, which are always in strict unison with the 'situation' in which they are introduced. The smallest details are handled with the same certainty of touch as the main outlines ; hence the whole picture never fails to induce in the reader the same feeling that nature awakens in the observer (only in a different degree), whether it be the solemn stillness of old towns and dark forests, or the soft and yet majestic stillness of a lake in the Highlands. His descriptions are both rich and accurate ; his outlines are sharp and clear ; his landscapes have always their characteristic tone. He gives, as Wordsworth does, at once the form and the spirit of a place, but with this difference, that the poet necessarily relies more upon suggestion.

To all these excellences must be added the variety of his characters and situations, his rich multifarious knowledge, and his historical fairness. However decided Scott's political faith was, and however it led him in his other works to crude and one-sided judgments, it had not the slightest influence on the handling of his fictional material ; he never alters a historical character out of love for his own views, or assigns to one a fixed tendency subservient to other than literary ends. Characters and circumstances so completely determine the development of each story, that the reader gives himself up to that delusion without which the highest delights and effects of fiction (of

whatever kind) are impossible, and follows the adventures of real men and women.

The following specimens are taken from the 'Legend of Montrose.' The first has a touch of that genial, mellow humour, which no short extract can duly illustrate but which has full play in Scott's characterisation, and shows traces of his frequent laxity in composition; in the second, his prose style appears at something like its best.

'The exterior of the castle afforded a singular scene. The Highlanders, from different islands, glens, and straths, eyed each other at a distance with looks of emulation, inquisitive curiosity, or hostile malevolence; but the most astounding part of the assembly, at least to a Lowland ear, was the rival performance of the bagpipers. These warlike minstrels, who had the highest opinion each of the superiority of his own tribe, joined to the most overweening idea of the importance connected with his profession, at first performed their various pibrochs in front each of his own clan. At length, however, as the black-cocks towards the end of the season, when, in sportman's language, they are said to flock or crowd, attracted together by the sound of each other's triumphant crow, even so did the pipers, swelling their plaids and tartans in the same triumphant manner in which the birds ruffle up their feathers, begin to approach each other within such distance as might give to their brethren a sample of their skill. Walking within a short interval, and eyeing each other with looks in which self-importance and defiance might be traced, they strutted, puffed, and plied their screaming instruments, each playing his own favourite tune with such a din, that if an Italian musician had lain buried within ten miles of them, he must have risen from the dead to run out of hearing.'

"Kenneth," said the old outlaw, "hear the last words of the sire of thy father. A Saxon soldier and Allan of the Red-hand left this camp within these few hours, to travel to the country of Caborfue. Pursue them as the bloodhound pursues the hurt deer—swim the lake—climb the mountain—thread the forest—tarry not until you join them"; and then the countenance of the lad darkened as his grandfather spoke, and he laid his hand upon a knife which stuck in the thong of leather that confined his scanty plaid. "No!" said the old man; "it is not by thy hand he must fall. They will ask the news from the camp—say to them that Annot Lyle of the Harp is discovered to be the daughter of Duncan of Ardenvohr; that the Thane of Monteith is to wed her before the priest; and that you are sent to bid guests to the bridal. Tarry not their answer, but vanish like the lightning when the black cloud swallows it.—And now depart, beloved son of my best beloved! I shall never more see thy face, nor hear the light sound of thy footstep—yet tarry an instant and hear my last charge. Remember the fate of our race, and quit not the

ancient manners of the Children of the Mist. We are now a struggling handful, driven from every vale by the sword of every clan, who rule in the possessions where their forefathers hewed the wood and drew the water for ours. But in the thicket of the wilderness, and in the midst of the mountain, Kenneth, son of Eracht, keep thou unsold the freedom which I leave thee as a birth-right. Barter it not, neither for the rich garment, nor for the stone roof, nor for the covered board, nor for the couch of down—on the rock or in the valley, in abundance or in famine—in the leafy summer and in the days of the iron winter—Son of the Mist! be free as thy forefathers. Own no lord—receive no law—take no hire—give no stipend—build no hut—enclose no pasture—sow no grain; let the deer of the mountain be thy flocks and herds—if these fail thee, prey upon the goods of our oppressors—of the Saxons, and of such Gael as are Suxons in their souls, valuing herds and flocks more than honour and freedom. Well for us that they do so—it affords the broader scope for our revenge. Remember those who have done kindness to our race, and pay their services with thy blood, should the hour require it. If a MacIan should come to thee with the head of the king's son in his hand, shelter him, though the avenging army of the father were behind him: for in Glencoe and Ardnamurchan we have dwelt in peace in the years that have gone by. The sons of Diarmid—the race of Darnlinvarach—the riders of Menteith—my curse on thy head, Child of the Mist, if thou spare one of those names when the time shall offer for cutting them off! and it will come anon, for their own swords shall devour each other, and those who are scattered shall fly to the Mist, and perish by its children. Once more, begone—shake the dust from thy feet against the habitations of men, whether banded together for peace or war. Farewell, beloved! and mayst thou die like thy forefathers, ere infirmity, disease, or age shall broak thy spirit.—Begone!—begone!—live free—requite kindness—avenge the injuries of thy race!"

'The young savage stooped and kissed the brow of his dying parent; but, accustomed from infancy to suppress every exterior sign of emotion, he parted without tear or adieu, and was soon beyond the limits of Montrose's camp.'

Jane Austen was born in a Hampshire rectory, lived a Miss Austen, life of quiet seclusion varied by a residence of 1775-1817. about eight years amid the tepid excitements of Bath, and joined the ranks of the immortals at the age of forty-two. Of her six complete novels, 'Pride and Prejudice,' 'Sense and Sensibility,' and 'Northanger Abbey' were written between 1796 and 1798, when she was not more than twenty-three years old; the last three, 'Emma,' 'Mansfield Park,' and 'Persuasion,' were written between 1811 and 1816. She is buried in

Winchester Cathedral. Her life was passed among the gentlefolk of rural England, 'far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife'; and this society alone finds a place in her pages. For all her quiet satire on its manners and foibles, she might well be the chosen portrait-painter of her class. Her limitations are very great; in other words, her limits are very narrow; but, within those limits, she is a supreme artist. '*Northanger Abbey*' is throughout a satire on the fictional method of the authoress of the '*Mysteries of Udolpho*'. Elsewhere Miss Austen is content merely to depict her surroundings; without effort, but not without infinite pains and care; without romance, but not without fascination; without subtle analysis, but with abundance of playful irony. It seems impossible that the domestic novel can ever attain a greater degree of perfection.

After her death in 1817 Scott wrote of her in his diary: 'That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements, and feelings, and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big bow-wow strain I can do myself, like anyone now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied me.' 'Never was there such exquisite manners-painting,' writes another critic; 'never was English middle-class life so delicately and truthfully rendered.' On the other hand, it must be owned that there is much truth in Charlotte Brontë's vigorous depreciation. 'Anything like warmth or enthusiasm (she says), anything energetic, poignant, heart-felt, is utterly out of place in commending these works: all such demonstration the authoress would have met with a well-bred sneer, would have calmly scorned as *outré* and extravagant. She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well. There is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy, in the painting. She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood. Even to the

feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition—too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands, and feet. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seal of life and the sentient target of death—this Miss Austen ignores.' To which Miss Austen might have replied with Wordsworth, that her works should be considered as developing those features which she 'felt able as an artist to display to advantage.' Certainly we have only cause to be grateful to her for perfect works of art, free from all the objectionable characteristics of our *fin de siècle* fiction.

The following characteristic extract is from 'Pride and Prejudice.'

"Oh, Mr. Bennet, you are wanted immediately; we are all in an uproar. You must come and make Lizzy marry Mr. Collins, for she vows she will not have him; and if you do not make haste he will change his mind and not have *her*.

'Mr. Bennet raised his eyes from his book as she entered, and fixed them on her face with a calm unconcern, which was not in the least altered by her communication.

"I have not the pleasure of understanding you," said he, when she had finished her speech. "Of what are you talking?"

"Of Mr. Collins and Lizzy. Lizzy declares she will not have Mr. Collins, and Mr. Collins begins to say that he will not have Lizzy."

"And what am I to do on the occasion? It seems a hopeless business."

"Speak to Lizzy about it yourself. Tell her that you insist upon her marrying him."

"Let her be called down. She shall hear my opinion."

'Mrs. Bennet rang the bell, and Miss Elizabeth was summoned to the library.

"Come here, child," cried her father as she appeared. "I have sent for you on an affair of importance. I understand that Mr. Collins has made you an offer of marriage. Is it true?" Elizabeth replied that it was. "Very well—and this offer of marriage you have refused?"

"I have, Sir."

"Very well. We now come to the point. Your mother insists upon your accepting it. Is it not so, Mrs. Bennet?"

"Yes, or I will never see her again."

"An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do *not* marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you *do*."

There is no need to draw a veil over the life of Charles Lamb, for it is as fine, in its way, as his writing. At Christ's Hospital (school of geniuses), he formed a life-long friendship with Coleridge (the 'inspired charity boy'), his senior by two years; he left the school with Leigh Hunt, and for the same reason, an impediment in his speech. He was clerk, first for a short time at the old South Sea House, and then at the India House, whence he retired in 1825, after thirty-three years' service, with a liberal pension. In one way Lamb's life was a prolonged tragedy. When, in 1796, his sister Mary, his collaborator in the 'Tales from Shakespeare' (1807), killed their invalid mother in a moment of maniacal frenzy, Charles gave up all thoughts of marriage and devoted the remainder of his life to a companionship unique in the history of English letters, one from which the element of pathos was never absent, and that of tragedy seldom. For the fits of insanity, returning at intervals, cast their dark shadow over both their lives, his certainly not less than hers. The lovable disposition of 'my gentle-hearted Charles,' combined with his growing fame, attracted to their humble home better society (on the authority of Crabb Robinson's 'Diary') than could be met anywhere else in London. The death of Coleridge in 1834 weighed on Lamb's spirits terribly; 'his great and dear spirit haunts me,' he wrote; and he was frequently heard to exclaim, 'Coleridge is dead!' At the close of the same year he followed his friend. Scott and Crabbe had died in 1832, Coleridge and Lamb died in 1834, Mrs. Hemans and Hogg in 1835. In his 'Effusion' upon the death of the last-named, Wordsworth wrote :

'The rapt One, of the godlike forehead,  
The heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth :  
And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,  
Has vanished from his lonely hearth.'

And in his lines ‘Written after the death of Charles Lamb’ he had said :

‘Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived !’

Lamb himself, in a sonnet on ‘The Family Name,’ had written :

‘No deed of mine shall shame thee, gentle name,’

and we may take Wordsworth’s testimony for it, that he kept his word.

With his poetry and his attempts at drama—seated in <sup>His prose works.</sup> the front row of the pit he was one of the loudest in hissing his own farce of ‘Mr. H.’ off the stage—we have nothing to do here, nor would Lamb’s fame be either heightened or lessened by their inclusion. ‘The Tales from Shakespeare,’ of which the tragedies are Charles’s share, led to his being asked to edit a volume of ‘Specimens of English Dramatic Poets contemporary with Shakespeare’ (1808), an undertaking for which no living man of letters was equally well qualified. Lamb brought to the task a mind free from all prudishness because perfectly pure; a critical acumen hardly less than Coleridge’s, an insight equal to Hazlitt’s, and a sympathy, at times amounting to reverence, that was peculiarly his own. ‘Barry Cornwall’ said that Lamb ‘had more real knowledge of old English literature than any man whom I ever knew.... The spirit of his author descended upon him, and he felt it !’ ‘If in deeper or more superficial sense,’ writes Pater, ‘the dead *do* care at all for their name and fame, then how must the souls of Shakespeare and Webster have been stirred, after so long converse with things that stopped their ears, whether above or below the soil, at his exquisite appreciations of them.’

Not until 1820, in the pages of the *London Magazine*, <sup>The ‘Essays of Elia.’</sup> the ‘alma mater’ also of De Quincey’s ‘Opium-Eater,’ did the first of those ‘Essays of Elia’ appear which have made Lamb’s name immortal. ‘The adoption of the signature,’ says Talfourd, ‘was purely accidental. His first contribution was a description of the old South Sea House, where Lamb had passed a few months’ noviciate as a clerk thirty years before, and of its inmates,

who had long passed away; and remembering the name of a gay, light-hearted foreigner, who fluttered there at that time, he subscribed his name to the essay.' In these essays we have Lamb at his best, the successor and the equal of Sir Thomas Browne and Addison and Goldsmith. Their flavour is of the most delicate; like 'Lycidas' in poetry, they may be taken as the touchstone of taste; to the literary 'gourmet' their value increases with years. 'The style has a peculiar and most subtle charm; not the result of labour, for it is found in as great perfection in his familiar talk; a certain quaintness and antiquity, not affected in Lamb, but the natural garb of his thoughts.' The style was natural to the man. In his essay on 'The Old and the New Schoolmaster,' he says, with his delightful humour: 'One of these professors, upon my complaining that these little sketches of mine were anything but methodical, and that I was unable to make them otherwise, kindly offered to instruct me in the method by which young gentlemen in *his* seminary were taught to compose English themes.' 'I was unable to make them otherwise'—fortunately. It is always the same Lamb, the same humorous pathos and pathetic humour, 'a sweet stream of thought bubbling and sparkling with witty fancies,' whether in familiar talk, or in his letters, or in the essays.

'Thou wert a scorner of "the fields, my friend,  
But more in show than truth.'

Yes, London, the London of a generation earlier than Dickens's, is Lamb's constant theme; he is her great prose-poet.

Our two short extracts are taken from the 'Specimens' and the 'Essays' respectively.

#### ON WEBSTER'S 'DUCHESS OF MALFI.'

'To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit—this only a Webster can do. Writers of an inferior genius may "upon horror's head horrors accumulate," but they cannot do this. They mistake quantity for quality, they "terrify babes with

painted devils," but they know not how a soul is capable of being moved ; their terrors want dignity, their affrightments are without decorum.'

#### MRS. BATTLE'S OPINIONS ON WHIST.

"A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game." This was the celebrated *wish* of old Sarah Battle (now with God), who, next to her devotions, loved a good game of whist. She was none of your luke-warm gamblers, your half-and-half players, who have no objection to take a hand, if you want one to make a rubber ; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning ; that they like to win one game and lose another ; that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card-table, but are indifferent whether they play or no ; and will desire an adversary who has slipped a wrong card to take it up and play another. These insufferable triflers are the curse of a table. One of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing at them.

Sarah Battle was none of that breed. She detested them, as I do, from her heart and soul, and would not, save upon a striking emergency, willingly seat herself at the same table with them. She loved a thorough-paced partner, a determined enemy. She took and gave no concessions. She hated favours. She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight, cut and thrust. She held not her good sword (her cards) "like a dancer." She sat bolt upright, and never showed you her cards nor desired to see yours. All people have their blind side—their superstitions ; and I have heard her declare, under the rose, that hearts was her favourite suit.

'I never in my life—and I knew Sarah Battle many of the best years of it—saw her take out her snuff-box when it was her turn to play, or snuff a candle in the middle of a game, or ring for a servant till it was fairly over. She never introduced or connived at miscellaneous conversation during its process. As she emphatically observed, cards were cards ; and if I ever saw unmingled distaste in her fine last century countenance, it was at the airs of a young gentleman of a literary turn, who had been with difficulty persuaded to take a hand, and who, in his excess of candour, declared that he thought there was no harm in unbending the mind now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind ! She could not bear to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty, the thing she came into the world to do,—and she did it. She unbent her mind afterwards over a book.'

William Hazlitt has already been classed with Coleridge  
 Haylett, and Lamb as our greatest English critics. He  
1778-1830. was more of a professional critic (in no offensive  
 sense) than either of his confrères, and stands easily  
 'princeps' in his class. If we make due allowance for the

differences between English and French modes of criticism—the greatest of which is that the Frenchman criticises by method and system, while the Englishman relies mainly on sympathetic intuition—Hazlitt is our English Sainte-Beuve. He was late in finding out, if not his powers, at least their true bent; he was later still (1814) in finding a means of making them felt in the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*. His great critical works are ‘Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays’ (1817), ‘Lectures on the English Poets’ (1818), ‘Lectures on the English Comic Writers’ (1819), ‘Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Elizabeth’ (1821), ‘The Spirit of the Age’ (1825). The last-named, a depreciatory portraiture and criticism of his contemporaries, shows Hazlitt’s incisive style at its best, but as criticism is not comparable with the other four works. In the ‘Poets,’ ‘for the first time, a critic of the highest rank took stock of the poetic achievements of England.’ One thing is certain, that Hazlitt does not receive his due of recognition from the reading public of to-day. The following extract is from the final lecture ‘On the Living Poets.’

‘But I may say of him [Coleridge] here, that he is the only person I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius. He is the only person from whom I ever learnt anything. There is only one thing he could learn from me in return, but that he has not. He was the first poet I ever knew. His genius at that time [1798] had angelic wings, and fed on manna. He talked on for ever. His thoughts did not seem to come with labour and effort, but as if borne on the gusts of genius, and as if the wings of his imagination lifted him from off his feet. His voice rolled on the ear like the pealing organ, and its sound alone was the music of thought. His mind was clothed with wings; and, raised on them, he lifted philosophy to heaven. In his descriptions, you then saw the progress of human happiness and liberty in bright and never-ending succession, like the steps of Jacob’s Ladder, with airy shapes ascending and descending, and with the voice of God at the top of the ladder. And shall I, who heard him then, listen to him now? Not I! That spell is broken; the time is gone for ever; that voice is heard no more; but still the recollection comes rushing by with thoughts of long-past years, and rings in my ears with never-dying sound.’

Thomas De Quincey, like Lamb and Hazlitt, found his De Quincey, public, if not the real bent of his genius, through 1785-1859. the periodical publications (never so important either before or since) of that day. His ‘Confessions of

an English Opium-Eater' appeared in the *London Magazine* in 1821; after that he transferred his contributions to *Blackwood*, then edited by his friend 'Christopher North.' De Quincey was known in Edinburgh—he is buried there in the West Churchyard—as the 'English Opium-Eater.' Carlyle said: 'Look at him—this child has been in Hell.' Before and after his marriage in 1816, his daily dose of opium was what was said to be enough to kill forty men. Yet he lived to the age of seventy-four. His life was that of an eccentric nomadic genius; he lived in one set of rooms till he was nearly 'snowed up' with manuscript, and then flitted to another. Of the quality and permanent value of his work the most divergent estimates have been formed. To one he is 'Thomas de Sawdust'; to another he is the prince of English prosaists—but whoever exalts him to this position must lay much more store by the form than the substance of prose. He may be regarded as a literary blend of Jeremy Taylor and Coleridge (with the latter of whom he has several bands of affinity), uniting something of the eloquence of the one with the philosophical subtlety and 'faery' imagination of the other. He claimed to be the creator of the 'prose of impassioned reverie,' and prided himself that there was no such writing in the English language as his 'Opium-Eater.' But his thought is too often unworthy of its elaborate and stately garb.

#### ON THE KNOCKING AT THE GATE IN MACBETH

'Here, as I have said, the retiring of the human heart, and the entrance of the fiendish heart was to be expressed and made sensible. Another world has stepped in, and the murderers are taken out of the region of human things, human purposes, human desires. They are transfigured. Lady Macbeth is "unsexed"; Macbeth forgot that he was born of woman; both are conformed to the image of devils; and the world of devils is suddenly revealed. But how should this be conveyed and made palpable? In order that a new world may step in, this world must for a time disappear. The murderers and the murder must be insulated—cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs—locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested—laid asleep—tranced—racked into a dread armistice; time must be annihilated; relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and

suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is that when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds ; the knocking at the gate is heard ; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced ; the human has made its reflex upon the fiendish ; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again ; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.'

William Cobbett is a unique personality in English letters. An uneducated peasant's son, self-taught and self-made, he became a really great power in English politics, and the wielder of one of the most distinctive and virile prose styles that our literature can boast. It cannot be said of him that 'consistency still was a part of his plan' ; 'few publicists have contradicted themselves so flatly and so often' ; and it may be added that never was a man so unabashed or so unchecked by the exposure of his inconsistencies. Like Leigh Hunt, he served two years in prison for political journalism, but nothing daunted him. *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* ran from 1802 till his death in 1835, and for a great part of that time was the leading journal on the side of parliamentary reform. Its editor sat in the first reformed parliament as M.P. for Oldham. In 1803 he began 'The Parliamentary Debates' which nine years later passed into Hansard's hands. He wrote an Anti-Protestant 'History of the Reformation' (1824-7), which has often been translated into foreign languages, but which is partly vitiated by, what Hazlitt called, the writer's 'pugnacious disposition, that must have an antagonist power to contend with, and only finds itself at ease in systematic opposition.' His greatest work, to present-day readers at least, is his 'Rural Rides' (1830), a collection of papers contributed to his *Register*, giving graphic and picturesque accounts of a series of political tours on horseback throughout the country. Of the style of this successor of Latimer, Bunyan, and Defoe, the following extract will give some idea.

'What need had we of schools? What need of teachers? What need of scolding and force to induce children to read, write, and love books? What need of cards, dice, or of any games, to "kill time"; but, in fact, to implant in the infant heart a love of gaming, one of

the most destructive of all human vices? We did not want to "kill time"; we were always busy, wet weather or dry weather, winter or summer. There was no force in any case; no command, no authority; none of these was ever wanted. To teach the children the habit of early rising was a great object; and every one knows how young people cling to their beds, and how loath they are to go to those beds. This was a capital matter; because here were industry and health both at stake. Yet I avoided command even here; and merely offered a reward. The child that was downstairs first was called the lark for that day; and, further, sat at my right hand at dinner. They soon discovered that to rise early they must go to bed early, and thus was this most important object secured, with regard to girls as well as boys.'

'Poetry was always my amusement, prose my study and business,' wrote Landor, of whose 'amusement' something

Landor. has already been said. His audience is fewer, if not fitter, than Milton's. Many good judges rank his prose above his poetry. One of them says: 'He manages language literally as a great musician manages the human voice or some other organ of sound. The thought is at best sufficient, and it very frequently is that, but it seldom makes any tax upon even the most moderate understanding, and it never by any chance averts attention from the beauty and finish of the vesture in which it is clothed. The famous dreams which close "The Pentameron" are things of which it is almost impossible to tire. Nowhere else perhaps in English does prose style, while never trespassing into that which is not prose, accompany itself with such an exquisite harmony of varied sound; nowhere is there such a complicated and yet such an easily appreciable scheme of verbal music.' Here are a few sentences in illustration.

'I cannot tell how I knew him, but I knew him to be the genius of Death. Breathless as I was at beholding him, I soon became familiar with his features. First they seemed only calm; presently they grew contemplative; and lastly, beautiful: those of the graces themselves are less regular, less harmonious, less composed. Love glanced at him unsteadily, with a countenance in which there was somewhat of anxiety, somewhat of disdain; and cried, "Go away! go away! nothing that thou toughest, lives."

"Say rather, child!" replied the advancing form, and advancing grew loftier and statelier. "Say rather that nothing of beautiful or glorious lives its own true life until my wing hath passed over it."

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